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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH;

A

BIOGRAPHY.

BY

EDWIN PAXTON HOOD.

LONDON:
W. & F. G. CASH, 5, BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT.
EDINBURGH: JOHN MENZIES.
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TO WILLIAM BEST.

I BEG of you to accept this volume as an offering of affection and friendship, because to you I believe of all my friends the writings of the Poet have been the most constant companions, and his words the most abiding influences. But I would further wish to set up this volume as a pillar in memory of that old season when we first sat together with Wordsworth, in the parlour at Rydal, on that quiet August evening;—one of those glorious evenings we knew together by Grasmere and on Helvellyn; and of that other evening among these hills when you listened to these pages, with her, now gone from me, who united her wisdom and affectionate criticism to yours.

A biography in the usual sense of the word this book does not profess to be, it is an attempt at a coherent view of the life of the Poet, from his own records of thoughts and emotions, bound together by

the faint thread of circumstantial peculiarity and incident. It is true that Wordsworth had scarcely any life in which the world is interested apart from his works, but Dr. Wordsworth goes too far in saying "Let no other Life of Wordsworth be composed beside what has thus been written with his own hand." I have thought that there is a need for some such exposition as this volume professes to be, and while I feel that I have brought to the self-imposed task few other qualifications than affectionate reverence, I still hope that it may prove a not unacceptable companion to some who desire to know the writings of Wordsworth, but have no time to read what cannot be tripped lightly over.

To many, the estimate I set on the Poet will seem too high. I regard him as the Third English Poet, and eminently the Poet of our Age. If to Milton we may assign height, and to Shakspeare breadth, to Wordsworth more than either—we must assign depth. If Milton is the mightiest Epic Power, and Shakspeare the mightiest Dramatic Power, Wordsworth is the mightiest Reflective and Subjective Power. He extracts most the spiritual and moral significancies from all things, and penetrates farthest into the meaning of the burden of

the mystery:—"He entereth into that within the veil" of the human soul.

You will think as you read this book that sometimes I have floated away from the more immediate subject on a gossamer, which had not a very close relation to it. In reading the proof, I have sometimes felt this myself; for instance, it may seem the case in the analysis of the elements of tragic genius suggested by poems so short but so full and so vital as those of Laodamia and Dion.

And now, dearest of friends, and severest of critics, affectionately, Farewell.

E. P. H.

NIBLEY,
July, 1856.

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ERRATA.

For *Pelagian*, read *Pelasgian*, page 36, last line.
For *Jo*, read *Io*, page 36.
For *haggy*, read *shaggy*, page 120.
For *Temple*, read *Tempe*, page 214, third line from foot.
For *observative*, read *observation*, page 225, last line but one.

CHAPTER I.

The Gateway of Life.

I can say but little about him, and insufficient at best. A man who could be resolved into words must be an every day man. The star heaven no star map paints, altho' painting may represent a landscape. This beloved spirit resembled the swans which in the harsh season of the year keep the waters open by their motion. Born as it were with a love potion of fervid passion for Nature, like a Brahmin, with the lofty Spinozism of the heart, he cherished and held fast to his heart, every animalculæ, and every blossom. He and Goethe are our restorers of singing Greece, whose Philomel tongue not all the powers of foregone centuries had been able to loose. He was a Fort overgrown with flowers. A Northern Oak whose branches were sensitive plants.

Jean Paul Richter.—On Herder.
Vorschule der Æsthetik.

A life which has been of sufficient importance to be the subject of a Biography, is so from its having embodied to the world some principle—some central action or truth. There will ever be felt an interest—an intuitional curiosity to know the inner world of an eminent and celebrated man, and to compare it with his outer life. What were his habits and his inner resources? On what did he build his character? How far was he consistent

in his private and social relations with his words as Author and Teacher? To what extent was he a mere Artist, to what extent was he a Man? These are the questions, and these have to students of human character absorbing interest.

The character of William Wordsworth is curiously interesting to us, for he illustrates a most remarkable place in the literary history of our country. He stands as the central light of a new school of Poetry. It was for some time the fashion to class Him with Coleridge and Southey, and two or three others, beneath the general denomination of the Lake School; in fact nothing could be more false in classification. Southey was fond of recounting the story of human interest. He wanted the lofty imagination, and the deep intuition to make the Epic Poet, but his tastes lay entirely with that school. Coleridge was, indeed, the Poet of Metaphysical Analysis and colour, of all men most liberated from the actual world in the flights of his fancy, and yet preserving the balance of his wings steadily aloft, through fields of azure and gold, reflecting themselves on his pages. Neither of these although possessed of a very clear personal identity among Poets, can be regarded as the centre of a school, certainly not as having in their Poet character greatly influenced their age. But Wordsworth stands as a Poet at the centre and head of a new Order and Æra. He not only created a new school, but he greatly influenced all other schools. There is not one of all the young Poets—the men who are now read—who has not derived from him

light and strength. He is as lonely in his place of power as either Milton or Shakspere, and he has exercised and will exercise a more perennial influence than any writer since those illustrious masters. The reason of this we shall analyse presently; meantime this is the foundation of his great claim on our homage—this constitutes our interest in him, that He is the greatest Subjective Poet of our language. It is also true that more than is perceptible either in Shakspere or Milton, his poems constitute his life; this may be regarded as either praise or blame; it seems as if he lived only to record in verse his own experiences, emotions, and volitions; and hence equally with the poets to whom reference has been made it may be said he does not need a biographer; then let us hope that we may not be wasting the reader's time while we attempt to make him the expositor of his own verse and philosophy.

By Æsthetic Biography is simply intended a Life in its Ideal Attitudes. A life sketched from the Artist's point of vision, in which the faces, and dates, and events, shall be subsidiary to their effect on the study and habits of thought of the subject of his life. Thus there is no interference at all with the affectionate and voluminous life of Dr. Wordsworth, the poet's nephew. The aim throughout of the present author is, simply interfusion, and as he has said before, exposition; partially to bring the life and the poem into their mutual aspect, and contemplate them from one point of vision, and so shew how the life, and habits, and friendships, of the poet acted on his works; and again, by doing this to

arrive if possible at the central principles of the poet's genius—the roots from whence sprang those glorious branches, and fruitful and blossoming boughs of peculiar thought and fancy, which have made him so illustrious as a teacher and writer.

Thus, then, narrative in the ordinary sense of the word forms but a small portion of the present plan. Dissertation, and Illustration, and Elucidation, are of far more import to it, and however impertinent the office of guide sometimes is, there are those who will be grateful to one who will be, through these many volumes a mental cicerone, halting here and there to say to them, "this is beautiful,"

This volume is called an Æsthetic Biography. It does not take that for life which is regarded as such by ordinary biographies. It regards rather the hidden life. Biography usually concerns itself with the seen and the known; the river runs along in the open day, in the bright, clear sunshine. The life of the Statesman—the Warrior—the Philanthropist, cannot be usually Æsthetic; life with them cannot be an art; but this life is fed by unseen brooks and streams; they reflect shadows from the dim, obscure nooks of little village bays and solitary spots. It is true that every man has a life hidden from the world; nor is it the business of the world, either the prating, or the thinking, or the reading world to attempt to draw that life from its obscurity. But there are some men who have unfolded their life to us; their secret and hidden life, in their writings, and we find in their life the working of principles, and we no-

tice the influence of inner circumstances. There is a world within a world, which contains within itself the principles of unity, An Æsthetic Biography descends to that world; it does not regard the mental life as unimportant, or less important, but much more so than the outer, since it is the spring and fountain of all outer life. In truth all those dramas and fictions are æsthetic biographies, which unwind through the long soliloquy, and meditation, and conversation, the secret clue of motive. But this is a world of which most people know but little, the world of inner facts,—facts by the bye, usually ignored by Compts and others,—and therefore the actors on the bustling stage of outer life engage the attention most.

Most men feel no interest in tracking the course and the developement of a Passion, and noting it may be how in the kingdom of the mind one tyrannic and dominant Impulse overturns another; how the dynasty of passion perhaps yields at last altogether to the dynasty of Intelligence; or how the empire of passion merges in the anarchy of Crime. How the kingdom of mind has its own various spots of light and shade; recesses in whose umbrageous solitudes the great thoughts linger and fix their home; and open spaces where the people of fancy and affection pitch their tents; and how all these peoples, sometimes in commotion and sometimes in tranquility, pursue their way through the system of the soul. Now the poet makes us acquainted with all these, for they are his world; he watches their movements; he detects their points of

weakness and of strength; he has but little outerworld. Wordsworth for instance, whose memoirs we now propose to run through and link together, had but little Objective history; his Poems are his Life; they are a record of himself; of his own personal and private thoughts. No man depended less on what the outer could do for him, although he allowed the outer world to make an impression on him; say rather he allowed the world to take him wheresoever it listed, but insisted on preserving his own impressions of it, and giving them forth in independent tones and utterances.

For such men as Schiller, or Wordsworth, or Goethe, an Æsthetic or Subjective biography, is the only possible biography.

In the course of the following pages our attempt will be to connect the various portions of our author's history into a life. Biographies are of various characters. We have the Boswellian: a style of biography the interest of which seems to transcend its morality,—in a few exceptional instances it may be true that our ideal does not suffer by the nearness of our approach, and Johnson's is one. Wordsworth himself once remarked to the writer of this volume that "by-and-by the works of Johnson would be principally remarkable and valuable as commentaries on Boswell's life of him." Wordsworth's life is interesting as elucidating his works. A great life should be sketched as a painting, or wrought as a piece of sculpture, it should be the result of an acquaintance with the subject of it;—but what acquaintance? There are men who must be seen near at

hand to be painted, others are sketched best from a distance. The writer of this volume lays claim to no more personal knowledge of Mr. Wordsworth than that possessed by thousands, resident both in England and America; he has seen and conversed with him several times, and that is all. Yet it has seemed to him that, availing himself of no special lights, bringing to the work simple reverence, and acquaintance with the Poet's writings, a volume might be produced not needless nor unacceptable to many readers.

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland, on the 7th of April, 1770. Although his father was only an attorney, and his mother the daughter of a draper, his family was ancient, and it was his delight to trace back its history, both on his father's and mother's side, beyond the times of the Norman Conquest. To those who are disposed to believe in and to notice how race perpetuates itself, it is by no means unimportant to follow the course of a family genealogy, nor uninteresting to trace the names of both sides of his family to their Saxon derivative. Some ancient founder of the stock it would seem must have been a Poet too, capable of uttering the Weird, or Word, in a thrilling or worthy manner, and the gift which made the patriarch of the race remarkable descended on the son through the long course of generations.

But William, almost the youngest of the family, was not long to know the benefits and the affections of parental love. His mother died when he was very young, and at fourteen years of age, while he was yet

at school, he lost his father. It is probable that he inherited much of his mother's nature; young as her son William was she seems to have anticipated with maternal prescience the peculiar difficulties to which his temperament might expose him. She had remarked to a friend that of all her five children he was the only one about whose future life she was anxious. He describes himself as being when young of a stiff, moody temperament, daring and perverse; and probably made more perverse by chastisements more frequent than wise. His young days were passed in various places, with his mother's relations at Penrith, or in his father's house at Cockermouth. He has perpetuated and memorialized most of the impressions and doings of those childish days, with old Dame Birkett, to whom he went to school, and for whom and for whose teaching he always expressed a high respect and affection. With him too at the old dame school at Penrith there was a little girl, his playmate and fellow, Mary Hutchinson, who nearly thirty years after was to become his wife. He has also told us with what avidity he read books too in those early years; but more especially when he went from his home at Penrith to Hawkshead, a beautiful and tranquil little village, famous for a school on the foundation of Archbishop Sandys. His days here were important to him:—they nourished in him the love of nature,—they furnished him with images which sprang spontaneously along his verse in after years, and of which he has given to us many instances,—they fostered in him the love of independence, it seems even in that

early period, the love of solitude too,—here, as we have already said, the love of books if not a passion, as with boys of an inferior nature, yielded to him a harvest of delight; and Gil Blas, and Don Quixote, and Gulliver's Travels, and the Tale of a Tub, and the Works of Fielding were perused and re-perused. It could not but be the case that such a boy as William Wordsworth was, became very early watchful of his emotions, and his experiences. We see how at that early age all things reflected thought within him. He must have been a mystery to his companions. He has told us that the ode on the "Intimations of Immortality in Childhood" was the result of the working and movement of his own mind. And we know, from the same source, that daring feats and wild enterprises were to him something more than they were to others. The men and boys whom he met at school furnished him with many wide fields for thought and feeling in after life, when he renewed his old impressions and affections. He left Hawkshead at sixteen years of age, and the lines in which he apostrophised the lake, hills, and valleys, so beloved and endeared by memory and association, contain a tenderness derived from the memory of the past, and the anticipation of the future: a future all undefined to him, for he lost his father two years before, and the course of his life was wholly undetermined.

Cockermouth, the birth-place of our poet, is not the most interesting locality of the Lake District, although it lies on the threshold, or perhaps we might say in the centre of a radius of great interest:—it is twelve miles

from Keswick, twelve from Ennerdale, about six from the vale of Lorton, the Derwent babbles and prattles sweetly by its side, and the Castle, an old feudal structure, gives some character to the town. Nearly at the top of the one long common-place street still stands the house, a large square stone structure, where Wordsworth was born. One of his sons is rector of a little village not far from the town, the pretty little village of Brigham. But although the poet first saw the light here, the locality did not perhaps influence his character much; nor had he probably many associations with the place, although he has affectionately mentioned it in his Prelude, and celebrated the ceaseless music of the Derwent, then to him "the fairest of all rivers."

HAWKSHEAD exercised a much more abiding power. At that time from what we know of it we picture it to have been what Jean Paul would call a little mountain island, out of the way of all travellers; there were no pedestrians, or students with their sketch-books to visit it then, in 1769, the year before the birth of Wordsworth, Thomas Gray, the poet, very narrowly escaped paying it a visit. "All farther access" says he in his very interesting tour, addressed to Dr. Warton, "is here barred to ordinary mortals, only there is a little path winding over the fells, and for some weeks in the year passable to the dalesmen; but the mountains know well that these innocent people will not reveal the mysteries of their ancient kingdom, 'the reign of Chaos and old night,' only I learned that this dreadful road dividing again leads one branch to Ravenglass, and the other to

Hawkshead."* Some idea may be formed of the solitude and magnificence of the neighbourhood at this period, from the fact that the Eagle had not yet quite relinquished it as his abode. Gray stayed on the night of the day when he passed so near to the village, at the house of a brave young farmer, who had but just robbed an eagle's aerie, of an eaglet and egg. Indeed at that time the royal but destructive bird visited those mountains, and which was not so pleasant, those vallies, every year, to the annoyance of shepherd and flock. And what a place for a dreaming sensitive boy. There winter lingered late, and the frost and the snow came early; around the village the mountain streams tumbled and thundered, and gave refreshment to a race of people hardy and simple as their native hills. The tall black mountains guarded the beautiful waters of the lake. Few trades were followed, and those of the very simplest, the blacksmith's forge and the miller's water-wheel being perhaps the most prominent symbols of trade. The houses at that day would no doubt be simple rural habitations, but such as we love now to enter, when every object especially in the farm spoke of some effort at order and comfort, the rude pictures on the walls, the china in the corner cupboard behind the glass, the house surrounded by its little orchard and pretty flower garden, dear to the painters of rural scenery. The May-pole in the centre of the village, the scene of many a merry game. The people characterized by sturdy inde-

* Letter to Dr. Warton, October 18th, 1769. See Life of Gray, by Mason.

pendence, forming a little Mountain Republic, they had never seen cities, nor become familiar with the contamination of manufactures. Their dress at that time very plain, and party-coloured, and rarely boasting any ornament, the women clad much more after a Continental or German taste, than any dress we now see in England; their tables covered with bannocks of oaten cake and foaming milk. Such we fancy to ourselves to have been the character of the village life and scenery of that retired spot where Wordsworth passed some of the first and most important portions of his life.

In Education we must underrate nothing, and certainly not the influence of Scenery. It is true that neither scenery nor books, nor any course of training can put within the mind either faculties or sensations, any more than the light can create the eye, or fragrance the sense of smell, or music the perception of sound. But as without the ministers to the senses, they might as well be locked up and dead, so the faculties of the soul are awakened by the influences which flow around it. Circumstances cannot create a being, but they can colour it. Hawkshead forms an appropriate vignette to the frontispiece of the great volume of our poet's life, it was the place most calculated to affect such a boy as William Wordsworth must have been. The Excursion began here in this pretty little obscure market-town; that fluttering Heron from the bosom of the water, the majestic sail of that solitary Eagle rarely seen—those shadows chasing each other over the Mountains—that barren and exposed Heath, Hawkshead moor—those rugged Steeps and Fells, that

"kept to June December's snow"—those mysterious and significant Clouds, that would not "hear the loud winds when they call"—those lonely places among the Hills—those solitary Glens and Dingles, and gleaming Tarns—all these favoured that wondering sensibility awakened in that village.

But we must not hurry too rapidly over these interesting years. Looking now at the early period of Wordsworth's history, it is worthy of notice that he never had a period of life when he was not impressed by a visible and brooding presence of thought, his mind never lay unconscious, even in comparative childhood it was alive to vivid and precocious reflection, his school days not less than the later period of his life bear testimony to his sensibility to wonder, and to thought. We should hazard the remark that he was a boy of fine strong animal spirits, ready for all exploits:—for the climbing the crag or the tree, for the distant excursion or the homely game, capable of a fund of pleasure in all weather, undeterred by cold or rain from following the bent of his spirits, and turning all the accidents of the seasons into a glory and a joy, he says indeed

> Even then I felt
> Gleams like the flashing of a shield; the earth
> And common face of Nature spake to me
> Rememberable things.*

His mind was prepared to feel and to indulge in the charm of its own sensations, to exult in the deliciousness

* Prelude, p. 22.

of solitude, and his position and his age all conspired to make him feel yet more its "self sufficing power." Hawkshead as we have said is still a beautiful little village, then it was still more secluded; it was a kind of upland hamlet shut in from all contact with the noisy world, between two lakes, Windermere and Esthwait. The greater part of a century has rolled along since our poet was prosecuting his education there; such a course of training as he then pursued could now be followed and cultivated in no single portion of Great Britain. He was trained to a sturdy independence in his childhood; no letters then greeted him, as they now constantly greet the boys of our schools; cities were far removed, it was a sort of Highland solitude, not unlike the Fichtelberge where Richter's first days were passed. It was a realm unknown, untrodden, and unheard of by almost all the gentle or simple of the British islands; the trim tokens of cultivation and urbanity which now meet the eye over the whole lake district were then and there wholly unknown, and those scenes now only suggestive of beauty and majesty were not unfrequently, and especially in winter, the ministers of savage grandeur. That was not the age of magazines and newspapers, and the light literature which now sports so gracefully round the years of childhood and youth; no light canoes and pleasant rafts were there, on which the mind could put off quickly from the havens of thought, and stunt itself under the pretext of improvement. Sports and tasks were the occupations of the boys, and of the former summer and winter brought pleasingly fresh alterna-

tions, the records of which have been sketched with mingled power and beauty in the Prelude. Whoso converses too lengthily with solitude exercises his own mind, but imparts to his character a timidity and modesty, and reserve, greatly unfitting him for any active place among his fellow-men: and his mental and moral training in this lonely region influenced no doubt his whole after-life, and gave to a character quite disposed for such seclusion, its indisposition to all communion and fellowship with men. All things favoured this hermetic state, he did not board or lodge in the school or school-house, but like all the rest of the boys with an ancient dame, Anne Tyson. Night and day ministered to his solitary emotions. His pillow, even so young, was a place haunted by imagery to waking eyes; he speaks of the gladness with which he sought his bed

> "That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind
> Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft
> Had lain on summer nights to watch
> The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
> Of a tall ash that near our cottage stood;
> Had watched her with fixed eyes, while to and fro
> In the dark summit of the waving tree
> She rocked with every impulse of the breeze." *

Thus the presence of nature curtained round and impressed his spirit. Holidays spent in boating, or in boyish rambles, all ministered to the æsthetic passion of his soul.

* Prelude, p. 71.

Nothing at that time
So welcome, no temptation half so dear
As that which urged me to a daring feat:
Deep pools, tall trees, black chasms, and dizzy crags,
And tottering towers—I loved to stand and read
Their looks.*

And then the winter's amusement of Skating; the compass of poetry contains no finer description of that most zestful exercise than is given to us in his poem, from which we have quoted so much. This appears to have been the most favoured amusement. "For me it was a time of rapture." At sun-set, when the cottage windows were blazing through the twilight, as the village clock tolled six,

All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures—
So thro' the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed."

But it is more to our present purpose, as showing the character of the boy, and his peculiar life, that while the stars appeared, and the orange twilight sky in the west faded—he says

* Quoted from M.S. of Recluse, by Dr. Wordsworth, in the "Life," p. 41.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain; and often times
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping thro' the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—Even as if the Earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.*

We have quoted these passages principally as illustrating how from his first years Wordsworth was followed by the Sense of his own Consciousness. Even at that early period his own shadow fell on every object. Nothing was contemplated alone and in itself; mere animal pleasure and excitement we find invariably yielding to mental, and the enthusiasm of the boy speedily melts in an anticipation and fore-colouring of the character of the man.

This, as nearly as we can make it out, is his boyhood.

In tracing the history of those who have been most remarkable for their mental wealth, and the elaborate structure of their mental characters, it has always been most interesting to note the years, the occupations, and amusements of their Boyhood. We shall usually find

* Prelude.

how influential those years were in forming and laying the foundation of the character of the man.

Hawkshead was the school of the mind of Wordsworth; we find no unhealthy evidences of precocious maturity—he was a boy, not a man; his genius was too hardy and noble to develope itself too early; he was no Chatterton; images of beauty and power; the playmates he met there; the men who spoke to him in the casual intercourse of daily life; all tended to form him. Here he played with that boy whose delight it was to blow

"Mimic hootings to the silent owls;"

Here he met those two stately champions of the Hanoverian and Non-jurist politics, whose portraits have been so affectingly sketched in the Excursion. His tutor supplied him at an after period with that most exquisite series of paintings associated together with the name of "Matthew." The imagery of that most stirring and healthful neighbourhood lay ever after on his mind, and a passionate tenderness poured itself forth in prophecy when at the age of seventeen he left school, in lines well known to most English readers,

Dear native regions, I foretell
From what I feel at this farewell,
That wheresoe'er my steps may tend,
And whensoe'er my course shall end,
If in that hour a single tie
Survive of local sympathy,
My soul will cast the backward view,
The longing look alone on you,

Thus while the sun sinks down to rest
Far in the regions of the west
Tho' to the vale no parting beam
Be given, not one memorial gleam
A lingering light he fondly throws
On the dear hills, where first he rose.

While reverting to these early records of our poet's life, we have not been able to forbear some comparison with two other Autobiographies. We have regretted the very scanty materials we have for knowing the mind life of our author at that day. The history of the child related by the man we turn to and read with avidity, when it is written as it usually must be with intense delight and love. One of those ineffable gems of egotistic beauty is the fragment we have of the early life of JEAN PAUL, who preceded Wordsworth in his entrance into the world only by six years. His picture of his child life in the mountains of the Fichtelberge is one of the most sweetly natural paintings the fancy can conceive. With the humour and truth of Hogarth, and the homeliness of Wilkie, it unites the spiritual fancy of Maclise. It is impossible to read the first pages without feeling how much that is said of the Pine Mountain was true of Hawkshead, when the schoolboy days of Wordsworth were spent there, but it did not come in our poet's design to paint these. Richter has given to us a perfect German Idyl, interesting us exceedingly in the delineation of his good father's character, who was of so excellent a nature as to be able "to carve a haven out of an iceberg." We cannot avoid remembering the

comparative sameness of the boys in their solitude—in their education for the service and priesthood of thought, though in Richter there was this great difference, that *he had a home;* and well and deeply does he interest us in that home, with its summer and winter evenings, while the vesper bell was devoutly chaunting "*Die finstre Nacht bricht stark herein,*" (The gloomy night is gathering in) how touchingly and truthfully does he describe that home, when the shutters were closed and bolted, and *Knecht Ruprecht* was howling and grumbling without. Richter describes home a focus of love—the superstitions of that mountain region,—the amusements of that primitive household—all these stand out so beautiful and real; we are reminded of them only in Wordsworth's Prelude by their oppositeness to it, for Richter was but little of an artist, and he contemplated those subjects of his memoirs less through the eye of philosophy, than that of love.

Another autobiography of which Wordsworth's Prelude reminds us is GOETHE'S. He also may be regarded as a contemporary, but the point of likeness here is only in the strongly marked Individuality of the portrait. An education and early life passed in an old imperial city of Germany would invest the young associations with very different ideas to those induced by a residence among simple villagers and mountains, But again we are compelled to see that as compared with Goethe's autobiography Wordsworth's Prelude is only a record of emotions, stripped of that narrative dress which gives interest to the story of the mind. The mind of Goethe

was so constituted as to regard man in his relation to art more fully and completely than Wordsworth. And we shall turn aside to notice from time to time how he contrasts with our author in this particular. In the Prelude, "the history of the growth and developement of an individual mind," the influences which work around are few, all influences work from within. Goethe drew all nature into his nature, he attracted all things to himself. Not so Wordsworth, he had not those universal sympathies which would impel to all societies, and find a home in all. The medium through which both regarded objects was remarkably and wonderfully clear; but the mind of Wordsworth magnified and made sublime all subjects on which he gazed, Goethe, on the contrary saw things mostly with the eye of sense, beheld them in their mediocrity and simplicity.

The following is one of many of these traces of the same spirit as that we meet in Wordsworth's Prelude characterising Goethe's childhood. "In the second floor (in his father's house) was a room which was called the garden-room, because they had there endeavoured to supply the want of a garden by means of a few plants placed before the window. As I grew older, it was there that I made my favourite, not melancholy but somewhat sentimental retreat. Over these gardens, beyond the city's walls and ramparts, might be seen a beautiful and fertile plain; the same which stretches towards Höchst. In the summer season I commonly learned my lessons there, and watched the thunder-storms, but could never

look my fill at the setting sun, which went down directly opposite my windows. And when, at the same time, I saw the neighbours wandering through their gardens taking care of their flowers, the children playing, parties of friends enjoying themselves, and could hear the bowls rolling and the nine pins dropping, *it early excited within me a feeling of solitude, and a sense of vague longing* resulting from it, which, conspiring with the seriousness and awe implanted in me by nature, exerted its influence at an early age, and shewed itself more distinctly in after years. The old, many cornered, and gloomy arrangement of the house was moreover adapted to awaken dread and terror in childish minds. Unfortunately, too, the principle of discipline that young persons should be early deprived of all fear for the awful and invisible, and accustomed to the terrible, still prevailed. We children, therefore, were compelled to sleep alone, and when we found this impossible, and softly slipped from our beds to seek the society of the servants and maids, our father, with his dressing-gown turned inside out, which disguised him sufficiently for the purpose, placed himself in the way, and frightened us back to our resting-places. The evil effect of this any one may imagine. How is he who is encompassed with a double terror to be emancipated from fear? My mother, always cheerful and gay, and willing to render others so, discovered a much better pedagogical expedient. She managed to gain her end by rewards. It was the season for peaches, the plentiful enjoyment of

which she promised us every morning if we overcame our fears during the night. In this way she succeeded, and both parties were satisfied."*

We have quoted these interesting cases as illustrating the idiosyncracies of Genius in Childhood, and we have cited the two instances of Richter and Goethe from Wordsworth's close relationship to them both, by the marriage in him of the tenderness and fancy of the one, with the iron art and imagination of the other. But Wordsworth could not have written in lively and interesting prose the narrative of his early days by Esthwaite lake; His memory did not linger over the impressions which make autobiography delightful to the general reader: He does not mention incidents, and particularize days, but he generalises boldly the individualities of scenery. We think he erred greatly in not making the Prelude to partake more of the character of the Excursion; His own narrative of his childhood and boyhood wants more objective and actual interest. We are grieved to see that at this time his nurse, his schoolmaster, his playmates were not objects of great interest to him; it is true they were grouped into artistic relationship afterwards, they became furniture for the Poet's study by and by; we would have had them occupying a more human place now. But neither then nor at any time could he glide easily into the peculiar humours and individualities of people around him. He speaks of his being alone, and being a trouble to the peace that dwelt among his companions. Every

* Goethe's Dichtung und Wahrheit, p.p. 3, 4.

man is a trouble to us, who is among us, but not with us. He tells us how he felt the self-sufficing power of solitude. And solitude seems pressed upon our attention wherever we notice him; all other forms and figures are lost sight of. We see only the long chain of mountains, the loneliness of the lake, and the one figure of the musing boy by the side of all. The song of the invisible bird among the ruins of the Old Chauntry, over the cross-legged knight, and the old stone abbot, seems to strike more our thought, and his, than the picture of the village inn, and the sports and gladness of boyhood. The wren singing in the church was an incident principally subjective. Nothing was interesting to Wordsworth even at that early age that was not subjective. In that "Auxiliar power" which he has celebrated streaming from his own mind, and bestowing on the sun his splendour, and darkening in the presence of his eye the thunder storm,—we behold how the spirit of the boy begins to react on nature, and now trace the first intimations of that peculiarity of his genius to absorb the perception of personality in the sense of being. Even thus early his mind became an alembic in which things perceived, lost *their* identity in his own. It may seem premature and strange to discuss, or hint at this question and topic, now in these first years of boyhood. But Wordsworth was no ordinary boy, though it would be very wonderful to have revealed to us many a child's thoughts. He was haunted early as he plainly enough shows us with that mischievous tendency, that curse of our age, though it possibly never became this to him, to

sponge out for the most part objective being, or to make it only a wing on which to float away through the vast void of subjective and indefinite abstraction. From this he was ultimately saved. But the feeling and the tendency beset him. The childhood of Wordsworth unfortunately has proved the manhood of millions of men in our age, he says

> "I felt the sentiment of being spread
> O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still."

But it is a glittering, cold, unsubstantial page that *sentiment* of being, it affects us personally like the glaring wide open eyes of a beautiful corpse, or say, the eyeless socket of a dead universe.

We have reached the first pause in life—school days, school haunts, and school associations must be left behind, and the Mountains exchanged for the Fens: for Cambridge then was a very different place to Cambridge now,—there were then the stately colleges, which awe the spirit and soothe the heart, the petrified religions of the middle ages; but many of those noble structures which now meet the eye were not erected until a later period; the change however would be great. Some time was allowed, during which thought collected her forces and perhaps arranged some plans. To such a youth surely a time like this, an interval between the School and the University, between the Youth and the Manhood of life, would not be thrown away. The mind perhaps needs some such pause as this—Milton had it: the time for concentrated and fixed review and forethought,—when all the powers are standing on tiptoe

with expectation of what is to be,—when over the deep future, whisperings call, and from the deep heart, echoes answer,—when Imagination, and Conscience, and Motive, and Will, stand looking at each other,—when all the powers are waiting for the curtain to draw up, and the drama to commence. How solemn to all eyes is that moment in the history of youth. But indeed every moment in life is solemn, for does not a vast ocean untracked lie before, and is there not a whole wide region behind?

The University is the portal to the world. The young Knight in the ancient days of chivalry watched all the long dark hours of the night in the church, before he received his spurs, his sword, and his knightly character. He was left to pace to and fro the aisles, to bow himself before the altar—the last sunbeam looked in through the lofty window and saw him there. Cold starbeam and moonbeam, and earliest sunbeam shone over the nave and transept, through the stained glass, and saw him still watching and praying preparing himself for the battle-field. The image may provoke a smile on many a face; the occupations may suppose so mournful a contrast between the knightly preparations and the University career, and to this it must be answered, the intention in either instance is the same—the consecration of lofty powers, and opportunities for lofty work. Say indeed if the hours intended for Sacrament be dedicated to folly, still now as in every age it is the Heart which constitutes the Sacrament. We indeed think that many of the most sacred purposes of the Univer-

sity are lost, but still the idea remains the same. Seclusion, thought, reading, holy preparation, with the advantage of a secular life rolling on every hand its turbulent waves, thus all things conspire to rend the young spirit to whom serious thought addresses itself. All things are saying to it, Watch, Wait, but Aspire.

Home Education is very beautiful; it is a lovely theory; the perpetual inter-ministration of brother and sister; the unvarying tenderness of the mother; and for ever may there be throughout the halls and cottages of our land, hearts to reciprocate and prize each other's tenderness, and to feel, and yield to the blessed influences and chastenings of moral power. But lovely as the thing looks in theory, it is not good in practice. No, let that young fellow who will by and by have to breast the ocean, begin at once to learn to swim. You fear to trust him alone. Alas, and yet you *must* trust him alone; he will most likely have to enter and go through the world alone. The Family is a place where you should give your children high and sound principles; the World is the place where your son has to work them; and the University is an exercising school where meditation mingles with exercise, and both in turn salute and call on the youth to energy.

William Wordsworth had no home education, or next to none, but he is now brought to the world's great ante-room from his meditations by brook, and pool, and lake, by lonely glen and cliff; now he will enter upon another course amidst cloisters, and echoing aisles; among crowds of fellow-students of every shade of character;

and amidst scenes where the holiness of antiquity and religion, supplant the holiness of nature.

Cambridge, more than its great rival, Oxford, has been famous for the great names and natures it has fostered; mighty Poets, and mighty Statesmen—Milton, Bacon, Newton, Dryden, Cromwell, Marvell, Taylor.

He entered St. John's College, Cambridge, in October 1787, then in the eighteenth year of his age; but the University does not appear to have done much for him; whatever may be the condition of Cambridge now, certainly it was far inferior then, and our youthful student entered its walls ill prepared for the cramping fetters, the cold, and formal, and needless restraints imposed then on the under-graduates. He had not been prepared either by the previous discipline of Eton, or any other of the great public schools for the life he was to encounter; moreover, we can see that he became less and less disposed to yield himself to the study of books; Man, and Nature, and Human life, were calling him even then, and the university presented to him for the most part a wide and echoing hollowness. The institutions and the studies did not appear to be venerable to his eyes; at a subsequent period he narrated his impressions in the poem published after his death, the Prelude; we conceive him walking through those crowded halls, and courts, and aisles, and temples, a very lonely and friendless being; there was nothing either in nature to awaken within him these responsive echoes. Every spot of earth he visited before or after, yielded him some subject of thought, but Cambridge lies as it were a blank on his

life, to the reader almost unknown, to himself probably almost unsuggestive, although his college walks had been made venerable by the feet of Burleigh, and Strafford, Ben Johnson, Matthew Prior, and Otway.

Unsuggestive we have said, but we must revoke that word, or only use it with considerable limitation; he has introduced us in some measure to his musings in the university, though we can conceive from the outline of them that they were very desultory; life took no shape to him; he was impressed he says with

> "fears
> About future worldly maintenance,
> And more than all a strangeness in the mind
> A feeling that I was not for that hour,
> Nor for that place."

He was still pursuing too his wonted course of dressing the dead world in a spiritual vesture; even to the loose stones that covered the highway he gave a moral life; he saw them feel or linked them to some feeling. More and more the feeling of his independence came to him; he longed to stand unpropped, yet his mind he assures us had within, both the Cavern and the Arbour; the place for thought and the place for pleasure. The great men who had trodden the aisles and fields of Cambridge before him were to him an inspiration—Chaucer—Spenser—Milton. He has enwoven too with his history of those hours, the recollection of one solitary departure from the strict temperance of a lifetime. He began life a water drinker, and he confesses himself in several places of his writings a water drinker; only on one occasion does

he appear to have swerved, and the instance is mentioned with so much shame in his Prelude, that we are compelled to believe that the sin must have been trifling.

What surprises us most is that he gives us to understand he was something of a dandy at this time. So did he pass through these years of discipline—he did not devote himself much to books, either of the dead or living languages; he tells us he was a better judge of thoughts than words; he loved a few books, and those he then most loved, he loved till the close of life. Varying the hours of study in Cambridge with long pedestrian excursions, and now for the first time it would seem with his sister. As he prepared to leave the university, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was preparing to enter; how nearly were they related in their hours of study, separated only by a few months from that converse which might have changed the destiny of both. Doubtless, it was for the best; it is difficult to say what influence the one might have exerted on the other when we remember how they met.

In 1791 our poet took his degree of Bachelor of Arts and quitted Cambridge; the whole of the week before he was engaged in reading Clarissa Harlowe. At this time of his life his character was unformed, but it was soon to receive impulses and thoughts tending to form it; its state at present may be described as desultory individuality; a tendency to identify a life and being and meaning with every object, but not the power, the character, which starts up and assumes its own identity

and individuality in the midst of all. The character of his mind developes itself in the course especially of two poems written at this time, which we shall refer to by and by, descriptive, and in the style and measure of Pope.

CHAPTER II.

First Love, The Passion of Nature.

"For nature then
To me was all in all."
Tintern Abbey.

"Imagine a character in which the susceptibility of the mind is very trifling, but the sensitiveness of the soul so boundless that the slightest emotion thrills through every nerve of the spiritual being, united besides with a will so powerful that it divides with the soul the entire guidance of the moral feelings."
Schlegel. *Limits of the Beautiful.*

"He, who without the madness of the muses, approaches the gates of poesy under the persuasion that by means of art he can become an efficient poet, both himself fails of his purpose, and his poetry being that of a sane man is thrown into the shade by the poetry of such as are mad."
Plato. *Phædrus.*

Thus we have very distinctly reverted to the period of the Poet's life, when in virtue of that peculiar power he brought to nature, "he felt the sentiment of Being, spread" over all things, and as it would appear the sentiment of Being without the sentiment of Personality. It must be confessed that there is nothing in these earlier verses breathing either the image, or the sentiment of

the invisible—God. We are greeted by the same buoyant atmosphere which spreads over the works,—especially the Queen Mab,—of Shelley. Like many other Poets he derives his solace and his song from the spirit of nature. Not that we would mislead our readers in reference to his faith, we do not believe that he ever ignored the existence of the Godhead even in his mind; but it is evident that it did not reach him as a conviction imparting pleasure and delight, it was not to him the source of exuberant joy, it did not compel his spirit to pour itself forth in streams of music and emotion. He felt himself brought into contact with all things, all things gleamed out to him through a Spinozistic phantasm, and it was this which compelled him to place on all things some fitting laurel or rose-leaf of verse. Nature as yet did not present herself to him as a system, he did not behold her everywhere inter-penetrated by law.

It scarcely needs to be said that all who regard Nature as he did, bring to the observation, and to the pursuit their own minds—their mind gives the impulse, the sentiment, the pervading idea. External Being is absorbed in the sentiment of the present pleasure. In all those passionate invocations of nature, those outpourings of soul in which it claims alliance with storm, and night, with sunbeam, and moonbeam, and starbeam—with the weird whisper of the rustling wood—with the wail of winds imprisoned in the cavern, or leaping in their strength and their agony from hill to hill—with the ocean, and the river—with the blossoming tree, and the shrinking flower—in all those daring attitudes of spirit in which it claims

kindred with the solitude of the blasted heath, and the grim portals of highland rocks—when the shattered tower and the ruined church seem the impersonations of some like desolation in the soul—in the bleat of lambs, and the bark of dogs, and sounds even of creatures supposed to be meaner than these—in all those waiting moods and postures of the soul, when clouds of every shape and hue, portentous or cheerful, are messengers received gratefully by the spirit, the mind at once, a mirror and an echo gives back tones and sounds from all objects. In all these, Wordsworth's verses abound, they sink to the most pathetic softness, they rise to the most daring sublimity, they swell to the most majestic utterance; if we find him for some years worshipping as in a Pantheistic temple, it must be admitted that he bowed with a heart more universal than Byron, and with a spirit more reverent than Shelley.

And that Dream of Nature, that intoxicating poetry of the hills and the woods; how it besets the young spirit still; it is the opium and the opium dream of life, and it brings the rapture and the delight, and by and by the agony and the delirium of opium. It is true it is not easy to comprehend the idea of a personal God; but until that idea *is* comprehended, through what a tangled maze of dangerous enchantment the spirit treads.

Wordsworth presents to us now the picture of a spirit stricken with awe and adoration beneath the startling wonders around him and within him; 'tis mystery all! And that first dream of nature so surrounds the spirit by mystery, in every age the same, when the mind

emerges out of the child's dream of God into the youth's dream. As was the dream of the youthful world, so is it still of the youthful nation, the youthful mind. It was the myth of Egypt and of Greece; Nature beheld as a terrible and inexorable beauty. In England in this age how difficult it is to conceive the mind of the ancient Hellene—the Pelasgic spirit—for we have been circumfused, and interfused with a new genius and soul. But so far as our mind could resemble the mind of that early time, the mind of Wordsworth resembled the genius of the soil that produced Plato—calm, statuesque, imaginative, stern and mournful, impassive and heroic. His Verses, his Sonnets, his Prelude and Excursion, seem to us more like the utterances of an ancient Grecian, and Greece was, through all her rites and ceremonies, her literature, sculpture, and architecture, the mirror of nature. That transparent language, that polished mind, how they reflected the lights of heaven and of earth. Yet nature on all the soul of Greece sits like a dead weight, there is a mournful beauty over all her works—a mournful beauty—the soul cannot fly beyond nature. Is not this felt to be as a whole the great generalization of her mind; the spirit was not free, for it was the slave and bondmaid of an iron and inexorable Necessity. This everywhere met it, and now this everywhere meets us in her Drama, her Literature, and her Life—Pantheism! that word expresses the soul of Greece, and for the period of which we speak it expresses the soul of Wordsworth too.

Beautiful! dreadful! how it fascinates you, we say

that delightful dream—it is the summer garden of the soul; we sail through the glittering Archipelago; we touch the fair Hesperides—gorgeous heavens—radiant earth—glorious seas; what can man or angel want more? It is the moment of life's beauty—the Gods! We are the Gods—Creation behold it! Dissolution! Ah! we will not touch *that* dream—and the spirit—why it can shed and receive divinity from all things around it! from the silver linings of the clouds—from the golden groves and blossoms of the trees—from the perpetual choral chaunt of the hours and the birds, as they sing and chime responsive to each other—Phantasmal!—ah! if it be so—see the leaves are rent from the trees—and the blossoms fair haired, and the beautiful flowers, they die! die? what is that? and the ice comes heavily and sails over our fair river, and the gloom blots our Pleiades from the sky, and Love too; our beautiful fair haired boy, and our Jo they have gone from us. Alas thou beautiful nature, thou hast thy terrors—thy portents—death is beautiful, but what if death be the dissolving essence, and life never find itself again.

And thus the Grecian found his only consolation, his only ministration in nature was in the identifying himself *with* nature. He never rose above her. In a word is not this the difference between the drama of the Greek and the drama of Shakspeare—Necessity? it runs through the whole plot upon the stage. The Greek never recognised his freedom. How was it possible? The identity between the mind of Wordsworth and the mind of the ancient Pelasgian will realise to you the

difference between the mind of Wordsworth and Shakspeare. How mournful it is that eminent critics try our Gothic drama by the rules laid down for the poets of Athens—Time! Space! these are the Unities which must not, according to Warton and other critics, be outraged. Although since then the whole mind and genius of the globe has had brought to it, as to us new conditions. The moral of the Grecian drama is Necessity. Necessity is the great lesson we derive from Panthea, the spirit of nature—the spirit of Greece. The genius of Shakspeare's drama, in contradistinction to the mind of the Grecian, is Moral Freedom.

We are now contemplating a period of the history of our poet, when this sentiment of moral freedom but very slightly impressed him, he was held in a pleasing bondage, he was contented to breathe an atmosphere beyond which he could not pass. His faith was of too lofty a kind to sink to the cold nonchalance of Pope; but his mind hurried away into long and glittering abstractions, to speculations tinted with roseate colourings, and Nature was the centre of every beautiful and radiant dream. He turned aside the boughs of trees, and descended into the depths of caverns, and passed over difficult heights, and through subterranean chambers to find the fairy gnome, the intimations of whose presence perpetually met him; and when he penetrated to her court, Nature was the fairy, she was the Titania, the Ariel whom he had followed so ardently and long. Joyous unrest,—the cloud had not dimmed the star, the autumn had not touched the tree, the frost had not laid

a finger on the river; now and then perhaps the shadowy folds of some darker drapery might rustle behind the foliage of the wood, a shadow of a shroud sometimes clothed the hill; but yet like the partial frown on the face of a beloved beauty, it only intoxicated our Poet the more. The spirit of his homage to nature at this time is not less than enchantment, and Nature, Nature is his everlasting solace and song.

You have often heard Wordsworth mentioned by the side of Milton; but what in a word is the grand distinction between the two? is it not this that Milton, high over all his learning and his scholarship, over all his taste and through all his genius, heard the awful words of the Hebrew ritual sounding and surging "The Lord our God is one Lord," while Wordsworth through all his musings and his haunts, in the midst of all his readings and his delights, was perpetually followed by a beautiful Panthea. We could imagine him perpetually engaged in his earlier years in the utterance of the sublime prayer with which Socrates closes his discourse to Phædrus: "Oh beloved Pan, and all ye other Gods of this place, grant me to become beautiful in the inner man, and that whatever outward things I have, may be at peace with those within." Milton was essentially Hebrew, and Wordsworth essentially Greek. How sublime were both, we feel and well know. The mind of Wordsworth had no angles, it was smoothed and polished with exquisite grace and finish, the mind of Milton was rugged and unhewn, as the stones with which Elijah reared the altar on Mount

Carmel. Both Milton and Wordsworth carried perpetually the sense of their own consciousness,—in the consciousness of Wordsworth we only behold the eclectic sympathy of Plato, but in Milton the savage grandeur of the prophet to whom "the word of the Lord came in a dream" in the caves of Horeb. Wordsworth would never believe in divine commissions, and supernatural communications; we have no hint of the word lying like a burning coal on the heart, waiting for utterance, and impatient and consumed until it be spoken; but in Milton we have frequent intimations of the spirit that in its unrest, believed in the possibility of being raised up to execute the Heaven-sent command. Like the Greeks of old, Wordsworth does not appear to have had any very clear idea that the world contained any absolute evil;—as is the modern faith, so we could conceive his to be, that evil was a necessity of our being, scarcely to be deplored. But Milton on the contrary held the objective character of all evil; with him it was the thing "the Lord hateth," and he fought against it like his own Abdiel, or Ithuriel. Wordsworth did not seek to elevate his ideas above the world around him when he sought to enter spiritual regions. Spiritual! the world was all spiritual—all holy—all beautiful—the floor of the temple lay everywhere—the lamp was in the eye, in the soul to illuminate every spot with the charm of beauty. Milton found in the most lovely or glorious things around him the likenesses of "things not seen;" to him the legend was real that by and by, the trampling footsteps of the thunder would crush the

whole of this lower creation, and that out of it only then would spring the forms of eternal beauty and power, the true, the ancient Eros. In a word, Wordsworth is our modern Plato, and Milton our English Isaiah.

It is from this side of his character and genius that the influence exercised by Wordsworth over the mind of his age has been to many persons diseasing and mischievous. Milton and Dante materialised too much—Wordsworth abstracted and spiritualised too much, especially in his early philosophy; and it becomes the duty of those who guide young minds to the pages of Wordsworth, and linger with admiration over their eloquence, to caution readers against that dangerous and seductive sentiment of mere being—that dancing auroral light so flaming over the literary firmament of the age, that the most absurd and sensuous poems are hailed with delight, simply because they re-act against the unreal and intangible dreams of men of the merely subjective school. No man can be said to belong to any place of high art who cannot give to the eye what he desires to give to the mind—Poem, or Sermon, or Oration, let us see it, that we may judge of it. This is the test you may apply to all Pantheistic ideas, they are not susceptible of shape—this is the test you may apply to all the unhealthy megrims of mystics—paint their conceptions—be sure the thing is unreal that you cannot in some way or other realise; hence great poetry abounds in great images, from the chamber of the soul of the poet are thrown out the vast forms which answer

to his vast perceptions, for it is not merely necessary that the poet should have impulses, emotions, and passions, he must also have a presence and a shape rising perpetually before him, and compelling his pen to a delighted sketching of the beautiful, the beloved, or the terror-inspiring form.

We must not be understood as implying that Wordsworth was merely and only a subjective Pantheist even at this early stage of his history; he was never only that—we speak rather of doctrines deduced from this early stage of his history and writings, and repeat that many in our day are content to take his childhood as their old age; we need scarcely say, that in a great measure our poet passed through this dreary and monotonously beautiful stage of moral history, and rose into a higher faith; yet even then we find him speaking thus:

"If this be error, and another faith
Find easier access to the pious mind,
Yet were I grossly destitute of all
Those human sentiments that make this earth
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
That dwell among the hills where I was born.
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
With God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires,
The gift is your's; if in these times of fear,
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
If, 'mid indifference and spiritu

And wicked exultation when good men
On every side fall off, we know not how,
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers
On visionary minds; if, in this time
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
Despair not of our nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
The blessing of my life; *the gift is yours,*
Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! thou hast fed
My lofty speculations; and in thee,
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion."*

An illustration of the spiritual, the mystical charm of Wordsworth's poems is seen in the wonderful information and power of his Sense of Hearing; in this he excels all other poets; not in Shakspeare himself are the allusions to every variety and combination of Sound so varied and intensified. It is worthy of notice that it is by Sound rather than by sight that we become acquainted with the spiritual world; sound is the most spiritual conductor; language is not so mere a symbol as vision, and the impressions derived from sight: all our abstractions are derived by us through sound; the spirit sealed from sound is closed up to more utter desolation than the spirit sealed from sight; the blind have many brethren gifted beyond any of their race, the deaf have few,

* Prelude.

perhaps none. The impression of sound too, is more powerful and permanent than sight; thunder is more terrific than lightning;—is any thing added to the beauty and the majesty of the roaring waterfall by the rainbow arching over it? Eargate seems to be a more important avenue of communication than Eyegate.

"Where the Ear never hearkens the Eye never sees."*

And if space admitted it would be a most curious and profitable matter for speculation how far, for the major portion of our ideas we are indebted to the one or the other; certainly if light brings us into most intimate acquaintance with the scenery of nature, yet sound to higher natures is suggestive of more profound emotion; it is only by such natures that the majesty of "expressive silence" is perceived; what human breast has not again and again been shaken by all the varied thrillings and sensations produced by sound; for if we will reflect upon it, all sound is electrical—is spiritual; language however meagre, is sound made material and intelligible. Wordsworth in his ode to sound has summoned all the voices of nature to his inspiration, Sighs, Shrieks, and Hosannas, "Voices and shadows, and images of voice," "the Nun's faint Throb of holy fear,"

"The sailor's Prayer breathed from a darkening sea.
The cottage widow's Lullaby;"

the Shout of the Cuckoo from the hill; the Toll or Striking of the old church Bell, or minster Clock; the

* Schiller.

Words, earth to earth, and the Rattle of the clay on the coffin lid; the Hum of bees; the Voice of birds; the glad Uproar of children at play; the Bark of the watch dog, or the fox; the Tinkling of the sheep Bell; the Song of the nightingale in the deep covert of the grove, or of merry milk-maids in the meadows; Eloquence; the voice of the Storm among the pines, or Thunder among the mountains; the Wail of the Organ in the old abbey,

> "When the tubed engine feels the inspiring blast
> And has begun its clouds of sound to cast
> Forth towards Empyreal Heaven,
> As if the fretted roof were riven."

All these and a thousand other notes than these are intimations of power to us; our spirits are stringed instruments, and these varied winds sweep over the chords and call forth the music within us; in this conception lies the power of sound, and that it is ever symbolic, we are guided to the origin of music

> "When civic renovation
> Dawns on a kingdom, and for needful haste
> Best eloquence avails not, *Inspiration*
> Mounts with a tune that travels like a blast;
> Piping through cave and battlemented tower,
> Then starts the sluggard pleased to meet
> That voice of Freedom in its power,
> Of promises shrill, wild, and sweet."

The power of music on the Wild Beast of the Wilderness is finely painted,

> "The pipe of Pan to Shepherds,
> Couch'd in the shadow of Mœalian pines

Was passing sweet; the eye-balls of the Leopards
That in high triumph drew the Lord of Vines,
How did they sparkle to the cymbal's clang!
While Fawns and Satyrs beat the ground
In cadence, and Silenus swang
This way and that, with wild flowers crowned."

And in the following lines descriptive of Skating, we catch the glimpse of the sparkling steel, and the swiftly flying forms, not by any description of the physique of the scene, but by the Creaking of the Ice, and the dropping of the icicle from the tree, or the plunge of the snow-drift into the abyss below, startling the clear winter echoes, we have already aroused, while

"The precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and *every icy crag*
Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed."

But the references to sound and its influnce are scattered with such affluence thro' the volumes of the poet, that the citations can only be by way of illustration. Sound is made almost the soul of all things.

"By one pervading spirit
Of tones and numbers all things are controlled."

The heavens are filled with everlasting harmony,—"the ocean is a mighty harmonist,"—the skylark is a

"*Happy, happy liver,*
With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
Pouring out praise to the Almighty giver."

How exquisite that delineation of one of his heroines:

> "*Beauty born of murmuring sound*
> Did pass into her face."

How grotesque the picture of the boy who

> "Press'd closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
> Uplifted, he, as thro' an instrument,
> *Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,*
> That they might answer him."

All these intimations guide to an organic sensibility so refined that it seems to have quivered and trembled at every tone breath'd forth from nature's harp, and they unlock much of that apparent mystic hidden meaning of which it has been the fashion to speak in connection with the poet; sounds and scenes were to him unquestionably symbols, and had their moral significancies and meanings, the "wandering utterances" are questioned if earth has no scheme of moral music? and the meaning behind every sound, consoling the poet is that

> "Though earth be dust
> And vanish, though the heavens dissolve;—our stay
> Is in the WORD that will not pass away."

Thus we shall see clearly that the characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry which most prominently distinguishes it from all other writings, is the earnest and profound sympathy with nature *as* nature, running throughout. Let the reader attentively note the following quotations: in sweetness, in exquisite tenderness those

immediately following have seldom by any poet been equalled.

"I heard a thousand blended notes,
As in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts,
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did nature link,
The human soul that through me ran,
And much it grieved my heart to think,
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths,
And *tis my faith that every flower,*
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopp'd and play'd,
Their thoughts I cannot measure,
But the least motion that they made,
It seem'd a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air,
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament,
What man has made of man."

And thus,—the sympathy established between the poet and his world, that world becomes his instructor:

"One impulse from a vernal wood,
Will teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Enough of science and of art,
Close up those barren leaves,
Come forth—and bring with you a heart,
That watches, and receives."

How much truth there is in this the reader knows, of old this lesson has come to us as the wisest and the best, the only lesson indeed worth communicating. Study Nature; man is the minister and interpreter of nature—it is the study of nature that best calls out the inner life within us, that best suggests to us the worthy and the noble; it is surprising says the Apologist and Lover of nature, how little we learn from books; they are only valuable as they suggest to us natural analogies and teachings; the greatest masters learned of nature. "Believe me on my own experience," said St. Bernard, "you will find more in the woods than in books; the forests and rocks will teach you more than you can learn of the greatest masters." And all men become wise only as they sit at the feet of nature and make her the instructress, director, and teacher. Books are in many instances barren and unprofitable leaves;—they cramp the free soul, but let a man walk by the margin of the sea, or through the forest alcove for two hours each day, with no other pages save his own heart and the boundless worlds around him, and it is wonderful through what phases of mental and moral being he will pass.

Books are only valuable as they suggest ideas to the mind, but that man will be incomparably most rich in ideas who brings his consciousness to derive its power

from the great moods of revolving nature; "to him," says the loving Rhapsodist, "who listens to what nature says, she soon speaks in tones eloquently intelligible, who reverently seeks her, finds her, as Numa found the fond Egeria of old in the grotto and the cave, but nature must be wooed to be won; no coquet is she, to dance before the eyes of all, to unveil her beauties to the gaze of all, who likes to tread her exterior demesnes may—she opens free her pastures and her forests to all, the wilderness and the field, the mossy thyme-covered bank, the lonely woodland, the resounding shore, she never locks up her rainbows from the most vulgar eye; her mountain passes, her inland lakes, her bleak headlands, and ocean isles who will may see; but these are but the thresholds of her court and her temple; the grotto and the grove you may see, but the spirit, the arch priestess, it is possible to frequent the porch all your days, nor ever to behold her; the mind must be purged from earth's impurities, it must pass through trials and through mysteries like the Eleusinian of old, from hatred and scorn it must be purged, must come to the woods and groves chastened and forgiving; must come, not to be amused, not to kill time, but as a learner —come in this mood and no matter how else the pilgrim come, poor, persecuted, despised, bereaved, sorrowing, let him come and he shall be comforted; for him soft ministering voices shall run along the boughs in music; for him the nymph shall return to the wood, and the naiad to the stream; for him as he lies upon the margin of the stream, or beneath the branches of

the beech, thoughts shall descend like angels, comforting his spirit; he shall never go unattended upon his way,

> 'The common things that round him lie,
> Some random blessings will impart.'

Profound meditation will everywhere salute him, the ages with all their deeds, the strifes of the little battlers on this grave, our world, law, and order, and government, will unfold their pages to him, and above all and around all, for him there will be a presence palpable to the soul although invisible to the sense, the solemn presence of an active living power, every spot of ground will be charmed, this will make the world to him whatever it may be to others, one wide temple o'ercanopied with its fire-fretted concave; will impart to all his feelings the holiness of worship, and make his life a perpetual sabbath. The lessons of nature in this spirit obtained, impart to the mind a consecrating, all-hallowing love of rectitude and duty, training down the wild passions of the soul, and chastening and beautifying the austere." Thus far the Rhapsodist on Nature; still this is the key to the rich and wonderful charm of the verses we are now noticing. Passing by the peculiarity of Wordsworth's diction for the moment, or noticing it only to say that every great poet creates his own diction, that it is the result of his mental character, and that its fluency or dignity are the transcript of his own mind, we notice now the intense love of nature in our poet moulds the thought, and moulds the

speech to the thought. Let the reader again and again revolve these most affecting images,

> "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
> *The holy time is quiet as a Nun, breathless with adoration.*"

> "*The winds* that will be howling at all hours,
> And *are up gathered now like sleeping flowers.*"

In the following bold imagery he embodies the idea of Duty.

> "Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
> And fragrance in thy footing treads;
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong."

But the poem in which this lofty feeling of intimate communion with nature is most unfolded as a Philosophy and an Experience, is that written at Tintern Abbey, that poem like a mighty organ gives breath to every note and key of the poet's mind; the poem is lengthy, and a few sentences therefore must suffice this picture of the *boyhood of an enthusiast.*

> "The sounding cataract,
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood;
> Their colours and their forms were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye."

So the following sublime description of a mind dependent on nature for its inspiration and its power,

"For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity;
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime,
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

And yet one other passage on the Consolations of Nature,

"Knowing that nature never did betray
The heart that lov'd her; 'tis her privilege
Through all the years of this our life to lead
From joy to joy, for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life
Shall e'er prevail against us or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."

But it will not do—it will not do—we reach a point and stage in our moral history from which even the rush of eloquent music in the Tintern Abbey only dizzies the brain and dazzles the vision like the mag-

nificent star dust, the gorgeous and hazy nebulous chaos of an unformed system. The beautiful Panthea we find transforms herself into a horrible Sphynx with cold stony eyes, and rends in pieces her idolatrous children. A grinding, an inexorable destiny and fatalism seems to glare upon us through the rustling folds and robes of nature. Among the gorgeous blossoms and spicy gums of aromatic trees in the fiery but voluptuous South, lurks the fanged Cobra and Boa, and there we are not safe, while miasma and pestilence steam up from the plain and the garden, and the heavens become livid with the tempest and the storm; and in the North the sleets of winter overtake the fair heavens of the autumn, and the east winds chill the cheeks of our fainting darlings; very poor consolation indeed is that which is found in the benevolence of all compensating nature—the goddess-ship of nature—very poor is the comfort to be found in the boasted wisdom of Natural Theology; for our part we had much rather believe with the great Cudworth, that "nature is drunk. Nature," said he, "is *ratio mersa et confusa*. Reason immerged and plunged into matter, and as it were fuddled in it and confounded with it." Nature is master neither of art nor wisdom, most true, nature is a great poem, but not as her portrait has usually been sketched; nature is not more divine than man, for both nature and man are broken temples; ruins of a glory so sublime and infinite that nothing can hide the ancient grandeur or bury the marks of the divine original beneath the encumbering ruins. Nature like man is fallen, and can never

inspire love for her perfections; there is cruelty and implacability in nature; nature *has* "betrayed the heart that loved her;" there *is* evil in nature, and there are defects, and negations in nature; it is not on the present scheme of things the eye can quietly and lovingly rest; it is the future—the end; the present cannot be the object of God's preserving power; nature only becomes lovely when seen through the glass of faith, and that faith, the faith in Christ.

But those who take this period of Wordsworth's history as the portrait of his whole life, do as wrongly as those who judge Schiller's whole being by the Robbers, or Goethe's by the Sorrows of Werter. Rocks are dewless, as hard hearts are tearless. It was the gifted and wonderful sensibility within him that reflected the impressions of all natural objects; the passion was in his own soul—he stands before us like a young Greek in an infant world; nature to him appeared as one great soul—he called on all things; rocks, and stars, and waters, as one to whom the Apostrophe and Prosopopæia was not merely a vain, rhetorical and artistic cry, but an invocation to be heard and answered. The universe was a theatre of boundless wonder, if afterwards he did attain to the questionable advice of the old Roman,

> "Nil admirari, prope res est una,
> Solaque, quæ possit facere et servare beatum." *

He was far enough from it yet; he had a being as

* Horace.

keenly alive to natural impressions as Burns, but he heard voices rolling through all things which never fell on the Scottish poet's ear. He was carried beyond himself; inspired with divine phrenzy. It was a turbulent joy—it was a palpitation of heart, like that the young Egyptian felt before the veiled figure of Sais—it was not happy—no passion is happy. But we have only to notice that he stands here on the threshold of the temple charmed and entranced with nature as a mighty and beautiful being. It is the joy and poetry of a present passion; he has not yet attained the power

> "To class the cabinet
> Of his sensations."

If you would see what he was at this period as compared with what he became, carry your mind back to the beautiful scene on the banks of the Illissus, where beneath the shade of the plane tree, and agnus castus, amidst the gleaming marble images of Grecian Nymphs, and the shrill sounds from the grasshoppers overhead, Socrates and Phædrus sat conversing the whole of that long summer's day. Our poet now realises in history that madness of which the Grecian sage discourses to his young companion. Phædrus and Socrates—Tintern Abbey and the Excursion—Passion and Science; look at them side by side and they illustrate each other, and we know he learned to say afterwards,

> "By grace divine,
> Not otherwise oh nature we are thine."

Or reader of Wordsworth, do you know EBENEZER ELLIOTT; he may well serve us in what he was not, as an illustration of what Wordsworth was. In the Prelude the poet tells us he is

> "Not used to make,
> *A present joy* the subject of a song."

But that is precisely what Elliott does; he is not an Æsthetic poet, or but so in a slight degree; poetry with him is not an art but an impulse; with him the love of nature always was, and ever remained a passion; once Wordsworth tells us

> "The sounding cataract
> Haunted *him* like a passion."

But

> "That time is past,
> And all its aching joys are now no more,
> And all its dizzy raptures."

But nature never ceased to be all this with Elliott; he has never met with a thousandth part of the popularity he deserves, although he has been honored with the love and the lofty word of some of the most eminent critics of our day, among whom we may mention Thomas Carlyle, and Robert Southey; indeed Elliott had much in common especially with those two eminent men; perhaps he stands especially in the same relation to Wordsworth as a poet, in which Carlyle stands as a prose writer; he hurls and thunders his words along like tempests; or he sobs them forth with tearful and pitying tenderness; he cannot hold back his emotion; he is

alternately the laureate of cursing and swearing, and of sympathetic emotions and tears; frequently we have a line or couplet sweet and full as any Wordsworth uttered, and presenting as bright a picture to the imagination as when he paints to us a scene

> "Where the old woods worship God,
> Where his pencil paints the sod."

No poet is more at home

> "Within the sun-lit forest,
> Beneath the bright blue sky,
> Where fountains flow and wild flowers blow."

And he so sensitive to beauty felt the power and majesty of nature in an equal degree, as when he says, in imagery which many will think too daring,

> "Alone beneath the sky
> I stood the storm before;
> No! *God, the storm and I,*
> *We trod the desert floor.*"

What an Hogarthian Deserted Village we have in the "Splendid Village," and in the "Ranter," and the "Village Patriarch."

> "When daisies blush, and wind-flowers wet with dew;
> When shady lanes with Hyacinths are blue;
> When the Elm blossoms o'er the brooding bird,
> And wild and wide the plover's wail is heard;
> Where melts the mist on mountains far away,
> Till morn is kindled into brightest day;

No more the shouting youngsters shall convene,
To play at leap-frog on the village green,
While lasses ripening into love admire,
And youth's first raptures cheer the gazing sire.
The Green is gone! and barren splendours gleam
Where hizzed the gander at the passing team,
And the gay traveller from the city praised
The poor man's cow, and weary, stopp'd and gazed."

This was the burden of most of Elliott's Poetry—English Scenery—England's

"Blasted homes and much enduring men."

But this sentiment as we have said intruded too much into his poetical inspiration; for wherever we feel or see a joy or sorrow too powerfully, that broader view in which nature and time become the ministers of providence, and thus the inspiration of the poet,—is lost, and the personal emotions of the mere author become inferior to those wider views which make the artist the minister and prophet of God. This it is too which frequently gives to Elliott so much pungency and force, the memory of which will occur to the reader of his poems. From what we have said, our readers will gather that Elliott was in no sense an Æsthetic Poet; he did not subject and school his impulses and his passions; he wrote on no method or principle of composition, but he had a keen ear for the sounds of beauty, as he had a keen eye for all the sights of loveliness. He, like Wordsworth, has also localized his impressions throwing over the scenery of his neighbourhood the

hallowing lustre of his genius; but the writings of our author glow like glorious and full-orbed planets through the clear, calm, cold light of memory, Elliott's verses have all the splendour of the day-beam about them. We are sure that the eye shone brighter while they were composed, and the heart beat more quickly with the rapture of the inspiration. He mounted upwards in a chariot of fire, but his steed plunged and floated through lightning, and through sunbeams, and sometimes sunk down sprawling in bogs of very unpoetic expletive. He was a poet of nature, but not of a calm, and holy and purified nature—the poet of sensuousness—but the sensuousness of colouring and sound and scenery, the poet of passion, but passion winged not by lusts but by lightnings, and filled and inflamed not by wild and evil desires, but by wrath for wrongs unatoned, and evils unexpiated. He exaggerated sentiments therefore as all such men do—or seem to do—and hurled his bolts sometime for the purpose of crushing a demon, and sometimes to annihilate a gnat.

To return, from dissertation to narrative.

The early years of Wordsworth's life are very suggestive of thought. It would seem that his friends were most desirous that he should eventually enter the Church, and for the Church he would seem to have been eminently qualified; it is perhaps doubtful how far in his first years he was the subject of impressions transcending the religion of nature, and the absence probably of profound convictions, and the presence of that affection for lawless wandering, prevented him from taking

orders; he therefore was the cause of no little anxiety to his friends. What was to be his ultimate destination, his prospects were not bright in life at present; the whole of the money which should have been a source of income to his family, was kept by the bad Lord Lonsdale. There appeared even in the event of its being paid to the Executors, as it was ultimately, no probability of monetary independence. What was he to do? His education had been desultory; he had taken we have seen a degree of bachelor of arts, but we have also seen that the week before he took his degree, he spent his time in reading Clarissa Harlowe. Some of his friends proposed that he should attempt to write on a London Newspaper, and this was determined on. Owing to a most singular and providential circumstance he never attempted that work, for which it is difficult to conceive how he could ever have become fitted; writing to him was so great a toil and physical effort that we have in his life the record of his allowing three months to elapse without taking a pen in his hand; and it is as difficult to conceive how his style of prose, so singularly destitute of ease or humour, or flexibility, could ever have accommodated itself to the pages of a newspaper; life however was beginning to assume to his eyes a very serious, almost a frowning aspect; writing of his brother Christopher, he says, "He is a lad of talents and industrious withal. This same industry is a good old Roman quality, and nothing is to be done without it." His life was quite aimless. The law, and the church he determined against; his friends were displeased and

disappointed; it is clear that he was looked upon by them with suspicious eyes; he was not likely to turn out well; he had wasted years in continental wanderings and travellings, and the question was constantly recurring to his uncles, who were his guardians,—and now more frequently to him—what is to be done? how are you going through life.? The newspaper idea was determined on, and our juvenile poet wrote to a friend in London expressing his views and feelings; but he wrote from Penrith, where he was engaged in attendance on a sick friend, "My friend," he writes "has every symptom of a confirmed consumption, and I cannot think of leaving him in his present debilitated state." In a short time his friend died, and it was found on opening his will that he had left to the companion of his dying hours and days, the sum of nine hundred pounds.

Thus was the poet saved from much anxiety, and many difficulties, perhaps not too soon; not before he had so clearly realised the difficulty of his way that he was prepared in some measure to sympathise with those who were doomed to suffer without the friendly hand held out to relieve. The friend who thus aided him was Raisley Calvert, son of R. Calvert, Esq., the Steward of the Duke of Norfolk; he was no poet himself, says the nephew of Wordsworth, but he was endowed with that faculty almost as rare as genius—the power to perceive and know genius—to know a man likely to benefit mankind, he determined to do what he could to procure

for his friend a competency, in order that he might devote himself to literary leisure.

This is a very interesting period of our author's life —judging from his writings we must say his mind had not entered into light; his faith in politics and in religion was not that high, clear, vigorous exercise that it shortly became. Indeed, our faith in objective things depends much on our subjective faith; clouds without, are ever the reflections of clouds within. The objects of his mind have not as yet taken shape; he has hitherto only spread the canvas, and prepared the colours; he has done but little—attempted but little; we shall find however now, that he begins the life of an artist in earnest; indeed from the death of his friend and the reception of his legacy, it really might seem that heaven had spoken to him, and delegated to him the task of reforming the literature of his age.

We do not profess to present merely the stream of narrative; we must stop or turn aside to make our commentaries on events as they move. Our author is saved from the dangerous mountain pass of poverty. We have heard something said at this time of an attempt at starting a school; no doubt many a scheme—many a dim idea passed in review through his mind; of course he would have commanded our veneration more, had he been called out into active service to fight the wild temptations of life, and the probability is, we should have had a more rugged and daring poetry—he might have approached somewhat nearer to Milton. As we

believe that Wordsworth was really a true and brave man, we must regret that the adventitious fortune fell at his feet, because the greatest souls always look so much more noble when making their own fortunes, than when being crowned with the fortunes made for them. The truth is, the necessities of the outer world never sat severely on Wordsworth; he never heard the harsh voice of nature saying to him, "You must work or starve." Poor Coleridge heard that voice. Southey too, perhaps. One cannot but wonder how Wordsworth would have succeeded in a real encounter with the fiercest foes of human life—bodily vigour he had—shrewd sagacity he had—we feel that he must have been successful. He was apparently one of those men born to command evil to retire from them. Looking at his entrance on life—his desultory habits—his unfixed mind—his comparative poverty—all appear the prophecy of some future, like that which the lives of nearly all the Poets record. He escaped by no Providence within him, but by a Providence acting for him. His prudence,—his general economy, lead to the impression that wherever he had been cast,—whatever had been his lot, he would have retained his soul in tranquility, and his life in dignity; but we cannot but think of the hundreds of sons of genius less favored than he: men sublime as teachers—heroic as sufferers, on whom no kindly dispensation smiled;—Otway, Chatterton, Burns. Our more rigid philosophy opposes the thought; and yet for a time it will hold us. Had they only held the same

golden key, committed to their trust, what might they not have done, or been? This is certain, Wordsworth now resigned all thought of a profession; his means were poor indeed still, but he practices the spirit of his celebrated line

"Plain living and high thinking;

And henceforth he yielded himself to the life of the student of Nature, and of Man.

CHAPTER III.

Despondency, the Everlasting No!

"Sometimes most earnestly he said
O Ruth I have been worse than dead
False thoughts, thoughts bold and vain
Encompassed me on every side.

* * *

Before me shone a glorious world
Fresh as a banner bright unfurled
To music suddenly
I looked upon those hills and plains
And seemed as if let loose from chains
To live at liberty."

Ruth.

"From that abstraction I was roused
And how?"

Excursion.

"Hence too the folly of this impossible Precept, 'Know thyself;' till it be translated into this partially possible one, Know what thou canst work at. The speculative Mystery of Life grew ever more mysterious to me: neither in the practical Mystery had I made the slightest progress, but had been everywhere buffetted, foiled, and contemptuously cast out."

Sartor Resartus.

Probably the great University in which he studied was Paris; he spent some time in France, visiting that

country twice during the period of his vacations, the first time in company with a friend and brother collegian, but his second visit he performed alone in 1791—that most eventful year, from the silence and the repose of the Lakes, from the conservative order, or thoughtless frivolity of Cambridge, he plunged into a land where all around were the evidences of revolution, turbulence, and disorder; he was there during the days of the King's imprisonment; of Robespierre's pre-eminence; of the massacres of September; of the disputes between the Gironde and the Mountain; the wild harpies of war were hovering all around the fated nation, and within, the screams of anarchy. Wordsworth at this time was an ardent Republican too; he had pictured before his eyes man independent and virtuous, living among the harmonies of nature, and he had not seen enough of man or cities to break the pleasant spell, and delightful illusion; he formed intimacies too with some of the leaders of the parties of France; he walked along the banks of the Loire, and meditated far deeper things than had pleased the fancy of Goldsmith by the same rich and verdant river. Through Orleans and Blois, and other districts of France, he was a pilgrim, and again he sped to Paris, and found the horrors ripening there —those horrors not only haunted him then in his high dark lonely chamber, but during future years they continued even to disturb his dreams.

It has been remarked how critical was his position at this time—a youth; an orphan; most inexperienced; unused to cities and to the depravities of man: and

here in this great foaming sea of corruption and revolution—alone. How tame must all the lessons of the University have appeared to him compared with those tremendous preachings. He, walking through those cities intoxicated with the cry of Liberty and Blood,—receiving all into his moral nature. Here then was something for the daring youth more suggestive than the dizzy crag, or the black tarn among the hills—scenes of horror, and of affright, sounds, thundering along from Rue to Rue,—it is a solemn spectacle that young man walking through the Den of Lions in quiet contemplation, and there gathering food for thought and inspiration, and instruction for the whole mind of the civilized world when all that scenery of colossal crime should have passed away, a clot of gore in the ocean of time. We cannot either sufficiently admire, not merely the bravery and courage that could continue there—for that perhaps was natural to high minded youth, but the cool caution that could escape from the horrors of such a scene, though there is here perhaps more occasion to acknowledge the Preservation of Providence. His family affairs summoned him hastily from Paris, and it was perhaps well that they did so, as he had become intimately associated with the party of the revolution who were cut down by their rivals.

At this time his writings bear testimony that the life was visited by that deep melancholy and sadness which is not unfrequently the lot of the young, but exists most deeply in those of a lofty and poetic tem-

perament; it is very noticeable that the early part of our life, our youth and our manhood are frequently spent in the indulgence of a gloomy sentiment, as it is the foliage of summer that makes the deep shade of the arbour and the forest, while winter beams strike through the boughs like keen bright arrows, so the very exuberance of youth creates the pensiveness and the shade.

We are not informed sufficiently of the process of Wordsworth's inner life to give a judgment of the reasons for that melancholy which undoubtedly hangs over his writings at this period, but to such a mind there was enough in the unsettled state of society; in the violence and war which shook all Europe, to account for it, and it is probable too that at this time he had not matured those convictions which were to him at an after period a well of pure clear water. He appears to have felt the unhappiness of doubt without its distinctness. He never lay swooning as many have been doomed to do in the arms of scepticism; moreover he had on the power of a strong reserve, and it is likely that he did not reveal all the wounds he felt. But his was not a nature to attack the doubt in its citadel, or even to submit to the attack; his mind and heart were too reverent to permit a lengthy residence of those spiritual fiends Doubt and Despair, and hence his writings are much more salutary to the doubter who has braved the conflict, than to the struggler in the battle. For these reasons the grief of Wordsworth does not come to us invested in a definite cause—this may be the case with many who feel, and indulge in a sentiment which yet they cannot describe.

We learn however that his mind hovered over those everlasting problems which every one has to solve for himself; which no one can solve for another. The problems of God—of Providence and Divine Watchfulness—of the tangled skein of Human Affairs—of the grounds of Human Despondency—the light that shone about him was not cheerful, and Nature, even in her most pleasant aspects ministered rather to a sentiment of grief than of rapture. Manhood would appear to commence with the grief of life; even beneath the affectations of youth there is a gnawing fire of pain. Goethe, Schiller, Byron, innumerable instances illustrate it; so the surplus energy wastes itself—so the passions of youth fret and chafe along—the inquisitive wings beat upwards against the stars, frequently only to plunge back again among the icebergs. The daring and the restless spirit presses on with its sense of independence and zest of life only to return frequently impoverished to its dreary hut. This was not the case with Wordsworth; he neither dared so much, nor did he suffer so much, but he felt—how could he fail to feel, the jarring disproportions of life?—and attempted in his own way to solve the meaning of its agony—its misapprehension, its conflict, and its gloom.

We have again to deplore the scantiness of our materials for a review of this period of the poet's life. His biographer who has perhaps naturally exhibited no sympathy with these early years, has slightly slurred them over; perhaps there existed no materials for a more lengthened notice. Wordsworth was not a jour-

nalist, but he has thought his residence in France of so much importance as to devote a larger space to it in the Portrait and History of the growth of his own mind—and therefore it seems natural to pause a short time to review the course of it. It is to be recollected that at this time Wordsworth was a Republican—to whatever extent he changed his views and convictions it is necessary that his biographer should avow this. A youthful poet may be forgiven if he was once enchanted with the too flattering exhibition and enunciation of the Rights of Man. That was the day when the youth and genius of Europe were deluded and deceived; the domestic and foreign Rule of England too was not then so enchanting a picture as to present an antidote to foreign theories. It is only the noble, the beautiful, and the youthful who are fascinated with the inborn and inherent beauty of Republican Dreams, for they read human nature and history in the light of their own spirit. Our poet read in the light of *his* own spirit and his own experience too. In his Native Vales he had beheld something of the character of a Republic—he says, that through his youth he had beheld no one vested with especial respect on account of wealth, or blood; and when he went to Cambridge he found there too, how all stood upon the same equal footing as scholars and gentlemen; the first enunciation of the doctrines of the Revolution therefore seemed to him nothing out of nature's course. Ultimately the renewal of the voice of the revolutionary storm, and his neighbourhood to it, so that he could hear its utterance clearly and distinctly, saved him

from the great error into which many of the noblest spirits of the world, and especially of England, had been seduced—the error of supposing that the abstract truth is that most fitted for the guidance of the destinies of the present hour; for as has indeed been remarked, it is with our calculations respecting the course and progress of truths, as it is with the progress of the Cometary and Celestial bodies—those calculations, in order that they may evidence their truth, must take into account the power of the velocity of the body itself, but also, the Resistance offered by the Medium through which it has to pass. When Wordsworth inclined to embrace the doctrines of the Rights of Man, he was simply regarding the Abstract Truth—his residence in France furnished him with illustrations of the Resisting Medium; he saw passions raging in all their most virulent vehemence; he saw prejudices the most blind and bigoted operating around him.

We cannot but feel regret, and more than regret, something of annoyance too when we recollect that one of the chief poets of the world, was in France—was in Paris, during those days of horror—that he mingled with the Actors in that great bloody Tragedy; and that he has left us no notes of his secret thoughts and observations at that time. Could he not have described to us the men; he saw the snaky eye of Robespierre, and heard Danton thunder from the Tribune, and Marat rave on the Carrousel; he beheld the Tumbril rolling along the streets to the Guillotine; all that mighty

sea of horrors rolled and tossed, and heaved around him, but he has only noted the generalization of the picture; all its details were lost on him, and are lost to us: we cannot but conceive instead, Goethe there, and what an interesting addition should we have had to the Autobiography. The intense feelings of our author interest us too—the horrors robbed him of rest, for he was in Paris but a very short time—less than a month, after the September Massacres—he walked through the streets and heard the hawkers crying the denunciation of Robespierre by Louvet, but individual circumstances of the scene appear to have passed away from him, or to have been absorbed in the features of a more general portrait; so he paced the streets, no doubt visited the stormy assembly—beheld the place where now the King lay a prisoner, and eventually had to tear himself away from the scene of these vehement and contending passions lest he too should be dragged into the whirlpool, for he had formed serious thoughts of entering into the conflict; he had revolved his duty and position much; he had formed an intimacy with one of the noblest of the Girondists, Beaupuis, and often he had meditated how frequently the destiny of Man and of States hung upon single persons—the principal actors around him were young men like himself—the feeling that he was not a Frenchman was met by the recollection that humanity was one, and that in its essential unity it transcends all local divisions and distinctions; he had further meditated that his youth, his

weakness, his character as an alien, were all balanced by noble aspirations, by hope, by strong conviction, and by the recollection that

> "A spirit thoroughly faithful with itself,
> Is for Societies unreasoning herd,
> A domineering instinct."

It would appear that his feelings and his reasonings at this time lay almost complete around him, inviting him to an effort to turn aside the course of the Revolution by his individual will and power. One paramount mind he argued would have abashed those impious crests, and in despite of the ignorance and corruption of the people, would have cleared a way for just government. He has given the processes and the results of these ideas which obtained so strong a hold over his mind, in the Prelude and the Excursion—for a time they were with him in his loneliness an intoxication, but the time of trial as we have seen, passed, and he returned to England, to brood over the Spectres, the Revolution had raised within him.

We have seen in the pages of one Review* in this country, some sanguine hoverings round that singular and curious possibility, Wordsworth a member of the French Assembly—Wordsworth one of the Girondists. It is very probable to our minds that he really had mingled much with their counsels. The writer we have referred to cherishes fruitful ideas and fancies touching the influence of the mind of Wordsworth on the mind

* British Quarterly.

of the Assembly; softening and giving stability and magnanimity to its aims and paths. We can indulge in no such dreams—it is one of those phantasmal pictures which sport before the eye with a sort of licence in fact, but which fact as speedily dispels. He was not a man of action at all—his decisions were not prompt and momentary, kindled by the exigency of the occasion, and taking power from the difficulty of the circumstance and the conflict. He was essentially a Poet—a musing, meditative man, and among the furious devils who were engaged in tearing out each others hearts, he walked like the spirit of another and a better world. He saw, perhaps no eye in France saw so clearly as did his young eye, what was wanted there; but he had not the mailed hand, and the gauntleted will, and the remorseless nature capable of coping in that arena; and beside, Force is the mother of Force; the one can only incarnate the other, forth from that boiling sea of blood, who could be expected successfully to emerge, but the strong and wily young soldier, whose energies were perfectly equal to his will, and whose will was the ready creature of his passions and ambition.

But if the reader *will* construct a Romance there are the materials ready to his hand—Wordsworth leader of the Girondists—Wordsworth President of the Assembly—Wordsworth First Consul—taming the haughty spirit of the Republic; allaying its feverish thirst for blood; framing for it a Constitution; by the sovereignty of superior genius and goodness, overawing and crush-

ing the Lernean snakes of that unhappy nation; curbing the ambition of the young Corsican, whose eye of fire in such a case we can conceive resting with very boding meaning on the young Englishman—Lo! the whole course of events changed, and all History to begin over again. A piece of very pretty dreaming this—never fortunately attempted to be realized; for Ah! how different if the attempt had been made, can we not see would have been the destiny of the young dreamer, entangled among deeds and actors he must have abhorred —his purity and magnanimity soon attracting the feline glance of Robespierre—the glory and the freshness of his youth consumed in the attempt most vain and impossible, to save a nation not capable of its own salvation. An Angel descending to do the work of a hangman—a poor Bird of Paradise rustling and soiling its beautiful plumes in the smoke and pestilence of a loathsome city, or beaten down to Earth by hurricanes and tornadoes; its very wings so gorgeous and lovely, proving impediments to its flight. No, we cannot contemplate Wordsworth there, and in that case it could only have ended in his martyrdom, and in our loss of all those thoughts and words with which he has enriched our language.

We ought not to leave Paris without saying two or three words upon the friend of our poet, Beaupuis the Republican General, with whom he spent so much of his time in France; for whose memory he has twined laurels so graceful in the Prelude—but we know but little of him; the portrait sketched by De Quincey

in his Lake Reminiscences is substantially Wordsworth's, and adds nothing at all to the stock of our information; but his influence over the mind of our poet was considerable; he was however a Chevalier, like Bayard—a patriot like Hampden; he had the high refinements of scholarship and of humanity, and Wordsworth demands for him, unknown as he is, a place near the worthiest of antiquity. He was the Dion of France, and on the banks of the Loire he held such discourse with the high-hearted and hopeful English youth as

> "Under attic shades
> Did Dion hold with Plato."

If the Portrait in the Prelude may be trusted, then this unknown hero must stand before us transcendently above the noblest and best of the victims of that fearful Sacrament of Atheism, and Carnival of mistaken men and demons—Vergniaud and Isnard, and St. Just, look pale by his side, because he added to the glory of high poetic and political abstractions, the service and sacrifice of a heart faithful to truth and to God, and therefore in the highest sense faithful and true to man. Such a man could only bloom like a rose in a red hot iron crown, soon to be scorched and withered before the fiery breath of wild anarchy. The cruel, glaring, eyes of the leaders of the Mountain had fixed on both him and Wordsworth as new victims—as, in fact, English spies. He had no business there, except a momentary work, that of showing that the exalted heart may sanctify the most rude and virulent violence, and lift to nobility

the dark actions of stormy and passionate self-seeking men. We may quote the eloquent words of De Quincey, which are the best epitaph and monument after the words, in the fourth book of the Prelude, to his memory.

"This great season," says that elegant writer, "of public trial had searched men's natures, revealed their real hearts; brought into life and action qualities of writers not suspected by their possessors; and had thrown man as in alternating states of society, each upon his own native resources, unaided by the old conventional forms of rank and birth. Beaupuis had shone to unusual advantage under this general trial. He had discovered, even to the philosophic eye of Wordsworth, a depth of benignity very unusual in a Frenchman; and not of local, contracted benignity, but of large, illimitable, apostolic devotion to the service of the poor and the oppressed;—a fact the more remarkable, as he had all the pretensions, in his own person, of high birth, and high rank; and, so far as he had any personal interest embarked in the struggle, should have allied himself to the aristocracy. But of selfishness in any shape, he had no vestiges; or if he had, it shewed itself in a slight tinge of vanity; yet no—it was not vanity, but a radiant quickness of sympathy with the eye which expressed admiring love—sole relic of the chivalrous devotion once limited to the service of the ladies. Now again he put on the garb of chivalry; it was a chivalry the noblest in the world, which opened his ear to the Pariah and the oppressed all over his mis-organized coun-

try. A more apostolic fervour of holy zealotry in this great cause has not been seen since the days of Bartholomew Las Casas, who shewed the same excess of feeling in another direction. This sublime dedication of his being to a cause which in his conception of it, extinguished all petty considerations for himself, and made him thenceforward a creature of the national will,—'a son of France,' in a more eminent and lofty sense than according to the heraldry of Europe—had extinguished his sensibility to the voice of worldly honour: 'injuries' says Wordsworth—

> ——'injuries
> Made him more gracious.'

And so utterly had he submitted his own will, or separate interests, to the transcendant voice of his country, which, in the main, he believed to be now speaking authentically for the first time since the foundation of Christendom, that, even against the motions of his own heart, he adopted the hatreds of the young Republic, growing cruel in his purposes towards the ancient oppressors, out of very excess of love for the oppressed; and against the voice of his own order, as well as in stern oblivion of every early friendship, he became the champion of democracy in the struggle everywhere commencing with prejudice, or feudal privileges. Nay, he went so far upon the line of this new crusade against the evils of the world, that he even accepted—with a conscientious defiance of his own inevitable homage to the erring spirit of loyalty embarked upon that cause—

a commission in the Republican armies preparing to move against La Vendee; and finally in that cause, as commander-in-chief, he laid down his life."

Reverting again to these miseries of life felt by the poet to the extent to which he could feel; no doubt his residence in France, and the disappointments of those days and hours contributed—for as yet his mind was not buoyed up and sustained by those correctives to despondency which at a later period were all his own. We think that his nephew writes too much by the rote and the rule when he says "His feelings at the dawn of the French Revolution have been described. We have seen also the distress into which he was thrown by the savage acts that polluted a cause which he regarded as the cause of heaven. His mind was whirled round and round in a vortex of doubt, and appeared to be almost on the point of sinking into a gulf of despair; not that he ever lapsed into scepticism—no! his early education, his love of the glories and beauties of creation protected him from any approach to that; yet at this period of his life his religious opinions were not very clearly defined. He had too high an opinion of the sufficiency of the human will, and too sanguine a hope of unlimited benefits to be conferred on society by the human intellect. He had a good deal of stoical pride, mingled with not a little of pelagian self-confidence. Having an inadequate perception of the necessity of divine grace, he placed his hopes where they could not stand; and did not place them where, if placed, they could not fall. He sought for ideal perfectibility where

he could not but meet with real frailty, and did not look for peace where alone it could be found. Hence his mind was ill at ease."*

It is to this period that reference is made in those books of the Prelude entitled "Imagination and Taste, how lost and repaired." And indeed it is the Synopsis of human history. Thus it is that by disappointment and loss of faith in man, all who have trusted, break from the Anchorage of Faith; the only difference being that to some the disappointment arises from one cause, and some from another. Simple natures know nothing of those terrible tempests which shake the souls capable of more profound observation, more extensive survey, and deeper feelings; but what matters that; the destruction of the ant-hill is to the ant as important a matter as is the destruction of a kingdom to men. The bird that returns to its brake and finds its nest gone, is as much cast forth from all rest as the poor villagers visited by the earthquake; shall we debate who are the noblest natures? those who feel through their hearts in dreary misanthropic moods, the rent of their nature from their kind; or those on whom all the voices of the storms of Revolution make their appeal in vain. The disappointments which shake our trust, sometimes result from the rending of our affections, and sometimes our faith in man. Wordsworth had evidently indulged in a very sanguine dream of human excellence and greatness; and he was perhaps especially inclined

* Life, 89.

to regard those with respect who founded all their speeches and exertions in boasted love to, and belief in man. He visited them at home to be disenchanted: he very affectingly describes his feelings at the time of the breaking out of the French Revolution

> "I brought with me the faith
> That if France prospered, good men would not long
> Pay fruitless worship to humanity."

He expected an universal triumph of goodness—an inauguration of virtue, justice, and truth. He met with a two-fold cause of sorrow,* but one of his most especial sources of grief was that England allied herself with the confederacy of Europe to crush the liberties of France. To him at that moment England seemed recreant to herself—seemed to him to depart from the central principle of her History and her Being

> "No shock
> Given to my moral nature had I known
> Down to that very moment: neither lapse
> Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
> A Revolution save at this one time:
> All else was progress on the self-same path
> On which with a diversity of pace
> I had been travelling: this a stride at once
> Into another region—As a light
> And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze
> On some grey rock—its birthplace—so had I
> Wantoned fast rooted on the ancient tower

* Prelude, p. [illegible].

Of my beloved Country. Wishing not
A happier fortune than to wither there:
Now was I from that pleasant station torn
And tossed about in whirlwind."

All have to undergo some great grief in life—many a far more close and severe grief than that which assailed our poet. Compared with those conflicts which many hearts have to bear and endure, his will seem indeed trifling. Still it was a mighty grief, no less than the reeling and splitting of a world, and the shaking foundations that seemed to stand firm and venerable beneath the feet—only, the cracking of the world is not so grave a matter to a man as the cracking of the heart, and the one is much more easily mended than the other. These rendings of heart or world too tend to harden, and to give substance to the mental nature, they strengthen, and when the spirit has recovered the shock they renew. A man has no very firm foundation who has not had, two or three times, his structure on the sand washed away; on the whole, have we not to say that great disappointments are among our best educators; they send away some pleasant illusions; let in some beams of light, painful it may be to the eye, but these illusions *are* illusions, and light *is* light, and it is by passing through the one, and gratefully receiving the other, that we are admitted to the true reality of things.

CHAPTER IV.

The Poet and His Sister.

"Under yon orchard in yon humble cot,
A younger orphan of a race extinct
The only daughter of my parents dwells;
Aye think on that, my heart and cease to stir
Pause upon that, and let the breathing frame
No longer breathe but all be satisfied.
Oh if such silence be not thanks to God
For what hath been bestowed, then where, where then
Shall gratitude find rest? Mine eyes did ne'er
Fix on a lovely object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thoughts
But either she whom now I have, who now
Divides with me that loved abode, was there
Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned,
Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang;
The thought of her was like a flash of light
On an unseen companionship, a breath
Of fragrance independent of the wind."

The Recluse.

"Woman with looks that can charm and enchain
Lureth back at her beck the wild truant again."

Schiller.

Up to this period the Poet had been for the most part a solitary, and perhaps not a very happy, wanderer

over the world; we cannot see that any person as yet had greatly influenced his life, and through his whole mental history it is difficult to find that any book or books materially affected him. He was separated from his brothers; he had in no distinct sense of the word a home, and he was the subject of feelings and thoughts which as yet had no kindred nature with which to communicate; for it seems he had been almost wholly separated from his sister,—his sister, who was however soon to exercise so fine and hallowing a control over his life and character: we shall have occasion to revert to his frequent and most affectionate mention of her; indeed it is clear that the history of the Poet's mind would be quite incomplete without thus tracing their connection together, since it is in reference to her he says

> "*She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,*
> *And humble cares and delicate fears;*
> *A heart the fountain of sweet tears,*
> *And love and thought and joy.*"

His nature was exquisite, and most sensitive in its tenderness, but it possessed many elements of a more stern and invulnerable character; and we cannot but think that his life would have presented a wholly different aspect to the world had his sister not been with him. We have sometimes even questioned whether she did not prevent his attainment to a higher eminence by constantly calling off his attention to shades and colours, and shapes, of simple and ineffable beauty, and thus preventing him from building up one great and elabo-

rate piece of architecture. We might think this if we did not also feel that that sister could comprehend his nature in all its powers and capacities far better than we can hope to do, and if we were not reminded by memory that the Excursion—his longest and perhaps most ambitious Poem, is not therefore his greatest work. He gives us intimations however how perfectly aware he was of his sister's influence over his mind, and the best constituted and most gentle nature would undoubtedly sink to a mournful callousness without some feminine influence around it; for Self-denial, Gentleness, Meekness, Watchfulness, Hope, and Faith, all that make a religious character, and a noble character, seem much more instinctive with woman than with man. Hitherto we have seen our Poet alone in his College Chambers, alone for the most part through the streets of Paris, and on the solemn banks of French Rivers, and still alone by the sick bed of his dying friend, and a battle was going on in his spirit which he had to fight alone; his writings, few, up to this period, bear testimony to the despondency stealing over his heart, when his sister—his only sister Dorothy became his companion. What his sister was to him he best knew, and he has certainly crowned her for immortality in some of the most beautiful and votive offerings of his verse; we could cite many illustrations—he says

"I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,
And sought that beauty which as Milton sings
Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
This over sternness; but for thee dear Friend!

My love too reckless of mild grace had stood
In her original self too confident,
Retained too long a countenance severe;
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
Familiar, and a favorite of the stars:
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests,
And warble in its chambers."

It is to her he frequently refers as preserving in the midst of all her enthusiasm a heart unadulterated by the world, retaining unshaken its faith and its confidence. Thus she met him in that moment when *his* heart had lost its repose, and when his mind had almost determined on casting itself loose from its safe anchorage and trust. And now we shall in following the one have also to follow the other—she accompanied him in his wanderings—she was his faithful prompter and amanuensis—she pointed to the more loving heart of things; and by delicate and graceful commendation and eulogy, and by preserving as an occasional insertion some of her own very beautiful verses, he has taught us how great were his obligations to his sister Dorothy. It seems as if in all the lives of our greatest and most venerable teachers, Nature constantly impressed on us the truth that man's education cannot be perfected without woman. She calls his spirit back when she uses her own natural force, from misanthropy and scepticism, and despair; she teaches him the weakness of merely intellectual strength; she compels him to distrust himself, even while she invites him to repose on

himself with more confidence; without her the affections sleep, and the eye refuses to look on objects from that point of vision whence their most healthful and invigorating aspects are cast. The mind of our Poet was in danger of bowing to these darkening shadows; it already felt the chill winds from the Sea of Doubt, and looking beyond, saw only a giddy reel of objects and beings deceiving themselves with the mockery of the possession of Will and Choice. He has honored his sister by shewing how she took him by the hand and restored him to nature. He points to her as influencing considerably the final building up the edifice of his character; thus adding in the graceful and unobtrusive manner in which she steps through the chambers of his history, another illustration to the influence of woman in moulding and giving destiny to the character of the most illustrious men.

In reviewing Wordsworth's obligations to his sister, we cannot but notice the most curious assistance, probably arising from the indisposition he constantly felt to use his pen in noting down the circumstances which met his eye and his mind. Dr. Wordsworth presents to us many illustrations of the constant exercise of his sister's eye for him. It almost suggests to us a sorrow that there was an inability to generalise—sufficiently—objects, seen when seen in themselves—not as parts of a great whole or world—it was this constant tendency to allow the eye to rest on the last object, and to be haunted by the impression of it, that prevented him from grasping all into one great whole; and we again

cannot but turn aside to think that probably the constant presence of his sister might be the cause of this. That he did not lack in himself the power to take in many objects and form them into one picture seems evident both from "Ruth," "the Leech Gatherer," and hundreds of other compositions; and we cannot but wish, notwithstanding all the beauty and glory of many of his smaller pieces, that they had been absorbed into the mental system—that instead of being distinct and occasional poems, they had fallen into the channel of mental structure and education—used not with reference to an impressive *show*, or for *that* spot or place, but for a wide Cartoon, and for all Nature and all Time; but perhaps the character of the Poet's mind prevented this, and it is certain that his sister aided that character.

The following illustrations will convey to the reader's mind the peculiarity of the aid he derived from his sister—thus at Grasmere, Friday, Oct. 3rd, 1800, she gives to us the origin of our old friend mentioned above, the Leech Gatherer. "When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double. His face was interesting. He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, a good woman, and it pleased God to bless him with ten children; all these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches were scarce, and he had not strength for it. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broke, his body driven over, his skull fractured; he felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensi-

bility. It was then late in the evening when the light was just going away."

And again in the same diary we have the origin of Alice Fell. "Feb. 16th. Mr. Graham called; said he wished William had been with him the other day. He was riding in a post chaise; heard a strange cry; called to the chaise-driver to stop. It was a little girl crying as if her heart would burst. She had got up behind the chaise, and her cloak had been caught by the wheel; she was crying after it. Mr. G. took her into the chaise, and the cloak was released, but it was torn to rags. It had been a miserable cloak before, but she had no other, and this was her greatest sorrow that could befal her. Her name was *Alice Fell.* At the next town Mr. G. left money to buy her a new cloak."

Again the origin of the Beggars. "W. wrote the poem of the *Beggar Woman,* taken from a woman whom I had seen nearly two years ago, when he was absent at Gallow Hill, and had thus described. On Tuesday, May 27th, a very tall woman called at the door; she had on a very long brown cloak, and a very white cap without bonnet; she led a little bare-footed child about two years old by the hand, and said her husband was gone before with the other children. I gave her a piece of bread. Afterwards on my road to Ambleside, beside the bridge at Rydal, I saw her husband sitting by the road side, his two asses standing beside him, and the two young children at play upon the grass. The man did not beg. I passed on, and about a quarter of a mile further I saw two boys before me, one about ten, the

other about eight years old, at play, chasing a butterfly. They were wild figures; the hat of the elder was wreathed round with yellow flowers; the younger, whose hat was only a rimless crown, had stuck it round with laurel leaves. They continued play till I drew very near, and then they addressed me with the begging cant and the whining voice of sorrow. I said, 'I served your mother this morning,' (the boys were so like the woman who had called at our door that I could not be mistaken.) 'O,' says the elder, 'you could not serve my mother, for she's dead, and my father's on at the next town, he's a potter.' I persisted in my assertion, and that I would give them nothing. Says the elder, 'Tom, let's away,' and away they flew like lightning. They had however sauntered so long in their road that they did not reach Ambleside before me, and I saw them go up to Matthew Harrison's house with their wallet upon their eldest brother's shoulder, and creeping with a beggar's complaining foot. On my return from Ambleside I met, in the street, the mother driving her asses, in the two panniers on one of which were the two little children, whom she was chiding and threatening with a wand which she used, to drive on her asses, while the little things hung in wantonness over the pannier's edge. The woman had told me in the morning that she was of Scotland, which her accent fully proved, and that she had lived (I think) at Wigtown, that they could not keep a house and so they travelled. After tea I read W. the account I had written of the little boy belonging to the tall woman:

and an unlucky thing it was, for he could not escape from those very words. Next morning at breakfast he wrote the poem *To a Butterfly*. The thought came upon him as we were talking about the pleasure we both always felt at the sight of a butterfly. I told him that I used in my childhood to chase them, but was afraid of *brushing the dust off their wings*."

"April 15.—We set off after dinner from Eusemere, Mr. Clarkson's: wind furious. Lake (Ullswater) rough. When we were in the woods below Gowbarrow Park, we saw a few *Daffodils* close to the water side. As we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw there was a long belt of them along the shore. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them: some rested their heads on these stones as on a pillow; the rest tossed, and reeled, and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing."

If now the reader refers to the four poems—Alice Fell—The Beggars—The Butterfly—and especially the Poem, the Daffodils, he will instantly see the kind of benefit conferred by his sister.

Thus far how much the life of Wordsworth has resembled the life of Milton—up to the age of 35 Milton was a traveller and wanderer among the nations of Europe, and through some parts of his own land—he had moved to and fro apparently in aimless existence, and in his own country appeared uncertain where to find a resting place; but Milton had no sweet sister to take

him by the hand, to give tenderness to his sterner moods; to guide his eye to the softening unity of things—from the world of men and objects his only retreat was to the world of books—he alternated his life between these two, and thus many of those fountains and lakes of softer soothings in his soul were dried up, and he sank into a comparatively stern and cheerless man, and when he married, he married uncongenially, not the little playmate of his infancy—the object of a long choice and admiration, but a woman who came from quite another hemisphere to that on which he had passed his days, unsympathising with his pursuits, his studies, his feelings, and perhaps alarmed by his vacant moods—it is no wonder that his verses rise like mighty cliffs, and that his beauties and tendernesses seem much more like the mossy lichen upon the rock, than the vein of beauty tracking its way within. How can we doubt that we are to seek in the homes of the Poets for most of the ruling principles which have governed their genius, or moulded their verse.

Never was bard so surrounded by good, true, and beautiful women, at that period of his life when he might have perhaps lapsed into the darker sternness of brooding and clouded thought, we have seen how his Sister accompanied him in all his travels—walked with him, talked with him, was silent with him, wrote for him, thought for him, seems indeed to have lived for him; then a Wife, the worthy and sympathising partner of his aspirations, frequently of his journeys; and then as years declined, the two were reproduced in

one, his dear Dora, his Daughter. All these influences must have been felt by him every day; whenever was bard so favoured before? Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Pope, Byron, Campbell—not one enjoyed such happiness, and we question whether one of all we have mentioned was capable of so much enjoyment—whether one among them could have treated woman with so much mental and moral deference, he was not polite or amiable, he was more, he was tender and manly. It is usually true, "the measure we mete is measured out to us again." In the language of our author,

> "Those who have little to confer,
> Find little to receive."

And it must infallibly be the law that when we case ourselves in a lofty and impervious reserve, forbidding the outgoings of tenderness, we by that same act close the pores of our moral nature against the admission of the healthy atmosphere too.

On returning from France one of the first places in which Mr. Wordsworth settled for some time was a place called Racedown Lodge, near Crewkerne, in Dorsetshire, with his sister. His life here, as the reader will be aware was the case with most of his life, had much the appearance of desultoriness; the country was lovely, his sister writes with enthusiasm of it, and of her travels over it; they spent their time in reading (the house itself was well stocked with books) and in gardening—the place was quite retired, having little or no Society, and Post, once a week. Racedown was made remarkable

in the life of our Poet by many circumstances, the most important of which perhaps was that here he became acquainted with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. These two men were destined to exert no little reactive influence on each other's lives and minds. Miss Wordsworth gives a very interesting description of him and of his first visit.

"At first," she says, "I thought him very plain, that is for about three minutes—he is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth; longish, loose growing, half curling, rough black hair; but if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark but grey, such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression, but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind: it has more of 'the Poet's eye, in a fine phrensy rolling,' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead."

The friends were mutually delighted with each other. Coleridge writing to a friend at this time declares that he feels himself but a very little man by the side of Wordsworth, while of Miss Wordsworth he writes, "She is a woman indeed in mind and in heart, for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman you would think her ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman you would think her pretty, but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive; in every motion her innocent soul out-beams so brightly that who saw her would say 'Guilt was a thing impossible

with her.' Her information various, her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature, and her taste a perfect Electrometer."

After staying in Racedown about two years they left and took a house at Allfoxden, principally to enjoy the benefit of Coleridge's society.

Allfoxden is a village near Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, not far from Bristol, among the Quantock hills, and of his dwelling here he has afforded us some very beautiful and interesting descriptions in many of his poems, and in the poems of Coleridge too, who was his constant companion, we find some very lively and more than graphic traces of the beauty of the spot they had chosen. Miss Wordsworth indeed expresses herself with rapture of their residence here, and speaks of it with greater delight than any of their other residences in England.

It was at this time when at Racedown and Allfoxden that Wordsworth made his only effort at dramatic writing, and produced The Borderers, which however was not published until nearly half a century afterwards, in 1842. We confess we do not turn to it with any especial feelings of pleasure; it wants most of the high tones and interests of such writing. Wordsworth had perhaps few of the elements of the Dramatist, and chose a subject which it is marvellous to suppose was interesting to him. He had not the ready sympathy the Dramatist needs—he had not that various style which gives to the Drama the perpetual charm of novelty—he could not sketch many portraits, and in this piece

there is a great likeness in the whole *Dramatis Personæ*. The action of the piece too is very harrowing; very repulsive—the character of Oswald is even far more horrible than Iago, in Othello; his criminality is apparently motiveless; he is described as one of those whose nature it is to

> "Spin motives out of their own bowels,
> There needs no other motive
> Than that most strange incontinence in crime
> Which haunts this Oswald. Power is life to him
> And breath, and being; where he cannot govern
> He will destroy."

The production of this piece belongs to that period when the mind of our author was ill at ease with itself, and how prone the mind in such moods is to turn to a process of moral and mental anatomy the reader may perhaps very well know. Such a period in the life of Shakspeare produced the moralizing and soliloquizing Jacques; such a period in the life of Schiller produced the character of Woolf, not altogether unlike Oswald, but having nevertheless the redeeming circumstance of motive for his atrocious and unnatural iniquities. Minds disposed to the pressure of their own character and individuality, are also usually disposed to watch the movements of other minds with a morbid interest; they are the men who would say

> "We dissect
> The senseless body, and why not the mind?
> There are strange sights—the mind of man upturned,
> Is in all natures a strange spectacle;
> In some a hideous one."

And quietly to note this spectacle of the upturned mind is a sufficient motive with many men for even the perpetration of great guilt. The old painter purchased the slave that he might watch and paint a death agony. The Entomolgist fixes the insect on the pin that he may watch its beauties as they are transfixed before him; and a moral anatomist will sometimes stretch a spirit on the rack, and so make it suffer, in order that he may be gratified with the curious spectacle of its agonies. But we may doubt if it be possible to become a Dramatist by following this course of study. We do not gather that Wordsworth had himself any great regard for this piece, though an author's estimate of his own works is proverbially no criterion of their excellence. As we have said, it is repulsive in the developement of the story and the plot. The characters are stamped by a great sameness, and the leading personage whose strength and criminality attracts our attention most, is incomplete, and strikes us as in finishing strikingly out of harmony with the idea of his power and the height of his sin. What the reader will expect to meet with however he will find—many thoughts of singular force, and strength, and beauty. Expressions and images in the highest degree pictorial; and look at the following passages,

"Great actions move our admiration chiefly
Because they carry in themselves an earnest
That we can suffer greatly.
Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
'Tis done and in the after vacancy
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed

Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
And has the nature of infinity."

Again

"It is
As you must needs have deeply felt it is
In darkness and in tempest that we seek
The majesty of him who rules the world.
Benevolence, that has not heart to use
The wholesome ministry of pain and evil,
Becomes at last weak and contemptible."

The Borderers is another of those works produced in the fever and excitement of mind consequent upon the French Revolution—the spectacle of the wonderful mingling together of colossal crimes and magnanimous virtues. It exhibits a curious interest in human nature—and suffering intense and terrible too—but it is the most deficient in leading moral motive of almost any work of the Poet's—it awakens thought but it does not sooth or lull feeling—it finds the mind unhappy and leaves it so. Every scene flows on through the terrible and the awful majesties of nature; there is nothing to calm the mind with sunshine or with peace—there are no visions the eye delights to recal—everything taxes the feelings and the affections—if the evil man and the evil deed do not in themselves triumph, yet they launch a bolt with fatal effect on the forms of love and virtue. The good that seeks to operate through the piece finds itself disappointed, and it appears only as a momentary hallucination, speedily put out in the dark night of crime. In this piece man stands shelterless against the

craft of subtlety and villainy—his soul rings and peals indeed with the intimations of a nobler being, but it stands out in a black and dreary waste, and its picture may be sketched from a few lines of the poem

> "On a ridge of rocks
> A lonesome chapel stands, deserted now:
> The bell is left which no one dares remove;
> And when the stormy wind blows o'er the peak,
> It rings as if a human hand were there
> To pull the cord."

It was while fixed at Allfoxden that our Poet and his party became the subjects of most ludicrous suspicion and interest, which would have afforded fine fun to the Jeffrey tribe. Coleridge and Wordsworth, and sometimes Southey, from their roving propensities were regarded as a band of very doubtful characters, and the Wordsworths in consequence were eventually quietly expelled from their village, which derives a transient honor from the men, it could not find a single villager able to comprehend. Coleridge, writing to Cottle, a friend of the group, and their Bookseller and Publisher, says: "Wordsworth has been caballed against so long and so loudly, that he has found it impossible to prevail on the tenant of the Allfoxden estate to let him the house after their first agreement is expired, so he must quit it at Midsummer. Whether we shall be able to procure him a house and furniture near Stowey, we know not, and yet we must, for the hills and the woods, and the streams, and the sea, and the shore, would break forth into reproaches against us if we did not

strain every nerve to keep their poet amongst them; without joking, and in serious sadness, Poole and I cannot endure to think of losing him."

Mr. Cottle in his recollections of Coleridge gives an account of the origin of this affair. "Mr. Wordsworth had taken the Allfoxden house near Stowey, for one year, during the minority of the heir, and the reason why he was refused a continuance by the ignorant man who had the letting of it arose, as Mr. Coleridge informed me, from a whimsical cause, or rather a series of causes. The wiseacres of the village had, it seems, made Mr. Wordsworth the object of their serious conversation; one said that he had seen him wander about at night, and look rather strangely at the moon! and then he roamed over the hills like a partridge. Another said he had heard him mutter as he talked in some outlandish brogue that nobody could understand! Another said, its useless to talk, Thomas, I think he is what people call a wise man (a conjurer). Another said you are every one of ye wrong; I know what he is; we have all seen him tramping away towards the sea; would any man in his senses take all that trouble to look at a parcel of water? I think he carries on a snug business in the smuggling line, and in these journies he is on the look out for some wet cargo. Another very significantly said, I know that he has got a private still in his cellar, for I once passed his house at a little better than a hundred yards distance, and I could smell the spirits as plain as an ashen faggot at Christmas. Another said, however that was, he is surely a desperd

French Jacobin, for he is so silent and dark that nobody ever heard him say one word about politics."*

We will not leave Allfoxden without citing from Cottle's Recollections of Coleridge an amusing incident belonging to this period of our poet's life. "A visit to Mr. Coleridge at Stowey in the year 1797, had been the means of my introduction to Mr. Wordsworth. Soon after our acquaintance had commenced, Mr. Wordsworth happened to be in Bristol, and asked me to spend a day or two with him at Allfoxden. I consented, and drove him down in a gig. We called for Mr. Coleridge, Miss Wordsworth, and the servant, at Stowey, and they walked, while we rode to Mr. Wordsworth's house, distant two or three miles, where we purposed to dine. A London Alderman would smile at our bill of fare. It consisted of philosophers' viands, namely, a bottle of brandy, a noble loaf, and a stout piece of cheese; and as there was plenty of lettuces in the garden, with all these comforts we calculated on doing very well. Our fond hopes however were somewhat damped by finding that our stout piece of cheese had vanished! A sturdy *rat* of a beggar, whom we had relieved on the road, with his olfactories all alive, no doubt *smelt* our cheese, and, while we were gazing at the magnificent clouds, contrived to abstract our treasure! cruel tramp! an ill return for our pence. We both wished the rind might not choke him. The mournful fact was ascertained a little before we drove into the court yard of the house.

* Cottle's Recollections of Coleridge.

Mr. Coleridge bore the loss with great fortitude, observing that he should never starve with a loaf of bread and a bottle of brandy. He now with the dexterity of an adept admired by his friends around, unbuckled the horse, and putting down the shafts with a jerk, as a triumphant conclusion of his work—lo! the bottle of brandy that had been placed most carefully behind us on the seat, from the inevitable law of gravity suddenly rolled down, and before we could arrest the spirituous avalanche, pitching right on the stones, was dashed to pieces! We all beheld the spectacle, silent and petrified. We might have collected the broken fragments of glass, but the brandy, that was gone! clean gone!

"One little untoward thing often follows another, and while the rest stood musing, chained to the place, regaling themselves with the cogniac effluvium, and all miserably chagrined, I led the horse to the stable, where a fresh perplexity arose. I removed the harness without difficulty, but after many strenuous attempts I could not get off the collar. In despair I called for assistance, when aid soon drew near. Mr. Wordsworth first brought his ingenuity into exercise, but, after several unsuccessful efforts he relinquished the achievement as altogether impracticable. Mr. Coleridge now tried his hand, but showed no more grooming skill than his predecessors, for after twisting the poor horse's neck almost to strangulation, and to the great danger of his eyes, he gave up the useless task, pronouncing that the horse's head must have grown—gout or dropsy! since the collar was put on! 'for,' said he, 'it is a downright

impossibility for such a huge os frontis to pass through so narrow a collar.' Just at this instant the servant girl came near, and understanding the cause of our consternation, 'la master,' said she, 'you do not go about the work in the right way, you should do like this,' when, turning the collar completely upside-down, she slipped it off in a moment, to our great humiliation and wonderment; each satisfied afresh, that there were heights of knowledge in the world to which he had not attained. We were now summoned to dinner, and a dinner it was such as every blind and starving man in the three kingdoms would have rejoiced to behold. At the top of the table stood a superb brown loaf; the centre dish presented a pile of true cos lettuces, and at the bottom appeared an empty plate, where the stout piece of cheese ought to have stood! cruel mendicant! and though the brandy was clean gone, yet its place was well, if not *better* supplied by a superabundance of fine sparkling Castalian champagne! A happy thought at this time started into one of our minds, that some sauce would render the lettuces a little more acceptable, when an individual in the company recollected a question once propounded by the most patient of men—'How can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?' and asked for a little of that valuable culinary article. 'Indeed, Sir,' said Betty, 'I quite forgot to buy salt.' A general laugh followed the announcement, in which our host heartily joined—this was nothing—we had plenty of other good things, and while crunching our succulents, and munching our crusts, we pitied the far worse

condition of those, perchance as hungry as ourselves, who were forced to dine alone, off either. For our next meal the mile off village furnished all that could be desired, and these trifling incidents present the sum and the result of half the little passing disasters of life."

We could linger now if the space of this biography were not intended to be brief, very pleasantly for a few pages at Allfoxden and Nether Stowey—very lovely and wild spots indeed were they—the house in which Wordsworth lived was a spacious mansion, which he rented furnished, in consequence of the absence of its owner—the neighbourhood was wild; luxuriantly wooded—the Quantock hills lay only at a little distance—the Bristol Channel only some mile away—and downs and moorlands stretched around—and lanes and rushing brooks, and every object that could give a charm to a poet's eye or fancy. Coleridge has given to us the most interesting pictures of this place in his Poems. It was a hermit's retirement for many remarkable men—here John Foster mentions having several times met Coleridge; and thus, in and near Bristol at that time, were congregated a cluster of eminent persons, who could not fail from their associations sometimes to meet each other. Robert Hall was in that sphere at that time, and we have some account, although we cannot lay our hand upon it, of his meeting with Wordsworth and Coleridge, in company with Foster; and it was in connection with and descriptive of this meeting that Foster remarked that Hall used his words, and language like an Emperor—saying to *it* "go, and it goeth," and

"come and it cometh," while Coleridge used his words like a Necromancer, with a more vivid and subtle power. It would have been a fine spectacle for those who delight to enter the mind's Colliseum to behold these two most powerful talkers of their age, in gladiatorial conflict together, and to be assured that in the light flash of Hall's dazzling pinions, and the gleam of Coleridge's ethereal force, the mind of either was contending—Demosthenes and Plato. To the Allfoxden period belong most of the lyrical ballads; the scenery of many of them is laid among the Quantock Hills; Ruth, and the Thorn, and several others. Then too, Peter Bell—and the Ancient Mariner of Coleridge were written, and written together; indeed nearly all the poetry of Coleridge, and all the most remarkable, dates from this place. His acquaintance with Wordsworth seemed to strike fire into his spirit. Wordsworth did something, but thought much more, he appears at this time like a man measuring his powers—it was a time of great reciprocal action; these two minds extracted much from each other. Wordsworth indeed matured his thoughts into a system, and built for years after upon the plan then formed; but Coleridge began there in rearing his pillars and palaces of cloud and rainbow; his achievements seldom passed beyond the utterance of the plan with the tongue, or the passing sketch with the pen.

In our desire to notice the localities in which our poet resided, and which exercised more or less influence over him, we must now follow him to Germany. He proceeded thither with his sister and Coleridge in Septem-

ber, 1798; at Hamburgh he saw and spent an afternoon with Klopstock, and both he and Coleridge have put the greater portion of the conversation on record. It does not exalt our conceptions of either the mental or moral power of that poet. They left Hamburgh, and thence went to Luneburg and Brunswick, but their destination was Goslar, the old imperial city. Coleridge left them and went to Ratzburg. The main purpose of all the parties was to acquire a knowledge of German language and German society, but for this object there were two impediments in the way. Coleridge writes to him, "You have two things against you: your not loving smoke, and your sister. If the manners of Goslar resemble those of Ratzeburg, it is almost necessary to be able to bear smoke. Can Dorothy endure smoke? Here, when my friends come to see me, the candle nearly goes out, the air is so thick." It seems in some particulars they were unhappily situated—they were there during the bitterest winter in the last century. "So severe," says Wordsworth, "was the cold of this winter, that when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron."

Goslar is a romantic town—here the German Emperors of the Franconian line were accustomed to keep their Court, and like all such places it retains some relics of its antient importance. It is situated too on the edge of the Hartz Forest. While here, some of the sweetest of our author's poems were written—the Poet's Epitaph, and Ruth; some of the passages of the Pre-

lude also, before the more connected commencement of that Poem; and that cluster of sweet and philosophical verses descriptive of the Village Schoolmaster—Taylor. His writings were not for the most part, at all affected by his residence, they were the production of memory and reflection.

In 1799 they returned to England, thus their residence in Germany was not of long continuance, and one might notice it as very remarkable that such a time should be chosen for the visit, and such a place should bound their visit—the most cold and uninteresting season of the year—and the dreary and deserted, but perhaps suggestive magnificence of Goslar. But as yet, there were few facilities for travelling, and the purse too was far from heavy yet; at any rate he left Goslar with pleasure. He commenced the Prelude almost as soon as the gates were left in the distance; the cold winds had not chilled his poetic raptures and ardours, but they did give a joy and freshness to his soul as he was leaving them behind him. He cannot be said to have increased his acquaintance much with German society and literature from this flying visit, but it deepened his regard for England; his nationality flamed forth anew in several beautiful lyrics, among the sweetest ever produced from his pen. Early in the spring of 1799 we find him at Durham.

In the autumn of 1799 we have to follow Wordsworth to his first settled home in Grasmere, where he lived for a period of eight years, between "the two divine sisters Rydal and Grasmere," as Miss Wordsworth has very

beautifully called them. Most of our readers we will presume have seen this lovely spot, and the memory will go back very readily to it, and to the well remembered and humble cottage where so many happy years were passed. It is a part of the Lake scenery, full of beauty, nor far from sublimity. There is more of the spirit of unearthly tranquility than in any other portion of the district—less town-like than Keswick, if somewhat less magnificent and Alpine in its outline. The Lake of Grasmere stretches out a vast sheet of water an image of repose and love. On the one side Rydal with its exquisite little islands, and on the other to be seen from a slight elevation, Thirlmere; while the village lies right under the rock and cliff. Beyond Grasmere, and on the same side, the traveller is delighted by the bold and magnificent promontory of Helm Crag, and on the opposite side the long sweeping range of Fairfield, and the Ridge of Steel Fell. Grasmere like a beautiful Princess, slumbering in a Giant's cave. Thirlmere like a moody and dark-browed beauty reflects the haughty features of Helvellyn, at whose feet it rolls—the two are separated in the prospect from the road by the elevated Cairne of Dunmail Raise, a heap of stones piled over the grave of Dunmail, the last King of Cumberland—and this traditionary tomb too, separates the Counties of Westmoreland and Cumberland. In this most suggestive neighbourhood Wordsworth fixed his home in the autumn of 1799. His wanderings now appear to have been confined mostly to his own neighbourhood; he was a close student, but his studies were

of Nature and Man, looked at through the medium of Abstract Truth, and now his works began to excite the splenetic fun of the Reviewers; they had produced little impression on the public mind. Messrs. Longman who have usually been liberal publishers, would not offer more than £100 for the two editions of his two volumes of Lyrical Ballads; he received a letter somewhat complimentary at this time from Charles James Fox, but it may be doubted whether that Statesman appreciated, or was fitted to appreciate the sentiments or the diction of the Ballads; and so we find our Poet quietly walking to and fro, and putting down the feelings which came to him in his lonely ramblings or musings with his sister, in those most unfrequented regions. In the year 1802 they both broke away from their solitude and visited Paris; returning thence they terminated their merely binary, lonely existence, and took another to share their solitude and their life.

On the 4th of October, 1802, Wordsworth was married to his old playfellow Mary Hutchinson, and on the 6th of the same month we find them all safely lodged again within the cottage at Town End in Grasmere, henceforth to be the place of their home; whose church was to be the place of their sabbath worship; whose churchyard was to be the place of their infants' rest, and the Poet's last sleep.

The final step then is taken; Wordsworth is settled in life. His actual income at this time was very small, but his life was very frugal, and his wants were therefore small. He might perhaps have passed through life

without the feeling of the necessity of that deep communion which the marriage relation bestows. He was like Milton too in this, the sensuousness of woman does not appear to have touched him—she was regarded by him wholly from her imaginative character and aspect—we have no record of any attachments formed in youth—there is no Romance like that sweet one of Gretchen in Goethe's Autobiography. Some Poets have ever had woman standing by their side as an inspiration and a presence; there are two or three illustrations apparently dating from Allfoxden—with a deep heart beating through them, they look almost too real for the mere sketches of the Artist. Does the reader know that green meadow

> "*Thy* mornings showed thy nights concealed,
> The bowers where Lucy strayed,
> And thine, too, *was the last green field*
> That Lucy's eyes surveyed."

And that other verse still more touching

> "She lived unknown, and few could know,
> When Lucy ceased to be,
> *But she is in the grave, and oh,*
> *The difference to me.*"

And while here we cannot but notice that there is another remarkable absence we may note in the Prelude—as we find that no thought ever apparently stirred, or struck, or gave great impulse to his being—we have as we have said no idea especially of awakened individuality—for that was always awake—that had ever been

aroused; so neither do we note any inspiration derived from woman—he has described such influence most graphically in two or three poems, but we have no reason to believe that woman ever was to him what she has been to most of us, an Intoxication and a Passion. It may perhaps be thought that his sister exercised that influence over him which usually is reserved for some other heart. We cannot believe that he ever felt those delirious ecstacies of passion, when

> "At length we go as Pilgrims to a shrine,
> And for a relic would a world resign!
> A glove, a shoe-tye, or a flower let fall,
> What though the least, love consecrates them all." *

He does not appear to us to have in a high degree ever loved woman—he loved his sister—he loved his wife—he dearly loved his daughter—but all this was of course; woman was not everywhere dear to him because she was woman; the sentiment he felt for woman was that of profound respect; a reverential homage but not admiration and sympathy which delights to live in the smiles and the neighbourhood of all good women.

Wordsworth was not the Poet of Passion; he could put all his emotions under a glass and look at them—he would never have been betrayed into any infirmities where Woman was concerned. He wrote several delicate and beautiful compliments on woman, but he did not render the homage which woman likes to receive, and

* Rogers.

which most men like to give; it was more the devotion of the mind than the heart; he was incapable of a great passion; there never was a man so unlikely to die of a broken heart from the love of woman—he has left us a portrait of a lover which might rival the infatuation of a Romeo; but we can scarcely believe it to be his own,

> "His present mind
> Was under fascination;—he beheld
> A vision and adored the thing he saw.
> Arabian fiction never filled the world
> With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
> Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring;
> Life turned the meanest of her implements,
> Before his eyes to price above all gold;
> The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine;
> Her chamber window did surpass in glory
> The portals of the dawn; all paradise
> Could by the simple opening of a door,
> Let itself in upon him: path ways, walks,
> Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank,
> Surcharged within him, overblest to move
> Beneath a sun that wakes a weary world,
> To its dull round of ordinary cares;
> A man too happy for mortality."

This is a picture warm enough in colouring, but it does not result from his biography; over every thing like early love there is an entire blank—more active love would have perfected his nature—with Burns for instance, all the beauty in the world was the embodiment of some feminine sentiment; and so with Schiller, and this caused their verses to overflow with expressions of tenderness and homage to woman; and it gave to their

poems so much of personal rapture and charm. We fancy that Wordsworth treated men and women pretty much alike, deducting perhaps a little for the inevitable politenesses of society; he would argue with a woman as a man, without any of those pretty little sophistries of speech which a great admirer of womanhood will even in spite of himself manage to lace his speech with —he treated woman with respect due to her humanity, and her mental and moral nature; he did not feel the Chivalry and the Knighthood of his nature kindled while he approached her, or while near to her—we think we gather this from his writings.

"To us," says De Quincey, "who were Wordsworth's friends, or, at least, intimate acquaintances—viz. to Professor Wilson and myself, the most interesting circumstance in this marriage, the one which perplexed us exceedingly, was, the very possibility that it should ever have been brought to bear; for we could not conceive of Wordsworth as submitting his faculties to the humilities and devotion of courtship. That self-surrender—that prostration of mind by which a man is too happy and proud to express the profundity of his service to the woman of his heart. It seemed a mere impossibility that ever Wordsworth should be brought to feel for a single instant; and what he did not sincerely feel, assuredly he was not the person to profess. Wordsworth, I take it upon myself to say, had not the feelings within him which make this total devotion to a woman possible. There never lived a woman whom he would not have lectured and admonished under circum-

stances that should have seemed to require it; nor would he have conversed with her in any mood whatever, without wearing an air of mild condescension to her understanding. To lie at her feet, to make her his idol, to worship her very caprices, and to adore the most unreasonable of her frowns; these things were impossible to Wordsworth; and, being so, never could he, in any emphatic sense, have been a lover. A lover, I repeat, in any passionate sense of the word, Wordsworth could not have been. And, moreover, it is remarkable, that a woman who could dispense with that sort of homage in her suitor, is not of a nature to inspire such a passion. That same meekness which reconciles her to the tone of superiority and freedom in the manner of her suitor, and which may afterwards in a wife become a sweet domestic grace, strips her of that too charming irritation, captivating at once, and tormenting, which lurks in feminine pride. If there be an enchantress's spell yet surviving in this age of ours, it is the haughty grace of maidenly pride, the womanly sense of dignity, even when most in excess, and expressed in the language of scorn, which tortures a man and lacerates his heart, at the same time that it pierces him with admiration:—

> 'Oh what a world of scorn looks beautiful
> In the contempt and anger of her lips!'

And she, who spares a man the agitations of this thraldom, robs him no less of its divinest transports. Wordsworth, however, who never could have laid aside his own nature sufficiently to have played *his* part in such

an impassioned courtship, by suiting himself to this high sexual pride with the humility of a lover, quite as little could have enjoyed the spectacle of such a pride, or have viewed it in any degree as an attraction, it would to him have been a pure vexation. Looking down even upon the lady of his heart, as upon the rest of the world, from the eminence of his own intellectual superiority,—viewing her, in fact, as a child—he would be much more disposed to regard any airs of feminine disdain she might assume, as the impertinence of girlish levity, than as the caprice of womanly pride; and much, I fear that, in any case of dispute, he would have called even his mistress, 'child! child!' and, perhaps, even (but this I do not say with the same certainty) might have bid her hold her tongue."

This sketch is mostly in harmony with those well known lines, which as illustrating a moral character we may introduce here:

"Ere with cold beads of midnight dews
  Had mingled tears of thine,
I grieved, fond Youth! that thou should'st sue
  To haughty Geraldine.

Immoveable by generous sighs,
  She glories in a train
Who drag, beneath our native skies,
  An oriental chain.

Pine not like them with arms across,
  Forgetting in thy care
How the fast-rooted trees can toss
  Their branches in mid air.

The humblest rivulet will take
  Its own wild liberties;
And, every day, the imprisoned lake
  Is flowing in the breeze.

Then, crouch no more on suppliant knee,
  But scorn with scorn out-brave;
A Briton, even in love, should be
  A subject, not a slave!"

The reader will remember that Miss Wordsworth continued with her brother during the whole of his life; her name becomes a part of the literary history of those truly wonderful coterie of men, who haunted in those days the English Lakes. The personal recollections given of her in De Quincey's Autobiographic sketches, are very full and very interesting; beyond these there are few with which we have any acquaintance; from all these we have said the reader will gather how ardent was her attachment to her brother, and her love of nature;—she was always ready for a ramble by his side. And through the future ages, which shall reverence his genuis, her name will be invariably associated with his. For in several of his more noble pieces he has indeed introduced her, not Laura with Petrach, nor Beatrice with Dante, nor the fair Geraldine with Surrey, are more really connected than is Wordsworth with his sister Dorothy. To him she was indeed Dorothea. Theodora the gift of God. His wife occupied herself with her matronly and maternal relations, but his sister travelled with him over the whole of our own or the other countries through which *he* travelled; it

was a beautiful companionship, and throws much loveliness round Wordsworth's History; it adds an irresistible charm to his Poetry, and is the key to much of its tenderness and sweetness of thought and expression.

The following notice from De Quincey is one of the most interesting we have seen of the person to whom it refers, and we cannot resist the pleasure of quoting it.

"Immediately behind Mrs. Wordsworth moved a lady, shorter, slighter, and perhaps in all other respects as different from her in personal characteristics as could have been wished for the most effective contrast. 'Her face was of Egyptian brown;' rarely in a woman of English birth had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm, and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, gave to her whole demeanour, and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment, and even of self-conflict that was almost distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often suffered in point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility. At times, the self-counteraction and self-baffling of her feelings caused her even to stammer,

and so determinately to stammer, that a stranger who should have seen her, and quitted her in that state of feeling, would have certainly set her down for one plagued with that infirmity of speech, as distressingly as Charles Lamb himself. This was Miss Wordsworth, the only sister of the poet—his 'Dorothy,' who naturally owed so much to the lifelong intercourse with her great brother in his most solitary and sequestered years, but on the other hand, to whom he has acknowledged obligations of the profoundest nature, and in particular this mighty one, through which we also, the admirers and worshippers of this great poet, are become equally her debtors—that, whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendency, too stern, too austere, too much enamoured of an ascetic harsh sublimity, she it was, the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain tracks, in Highland glens, and in the dim recesses of German-charcoal burners, that first *couched* his eye of the sense of beauty, humanized him by the gentler charities, and engrafted, with her delicate female touch, those graces upon the ruder growth of his nature, which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiness of its trunks.

"The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular, and thoroughly unsystematic. She was content to be

ignorant of many things; but what she knew, and had really mastered, lay where it could not be disturbed—in the temple of her own most fervid heart."

Was not that a Golden Age of Poets, when, as at the earlier part of the present century they all were found frequently among these districts, and all in undress, all certain that they could walk, or boat, without being looked at; without the embarrassing chains on their freedom, so complimentary, yet so confining. We have, as we have said, no wish especially to find some Boswell to be our guide and our reporter through those days, yet surely we may wish that we had authentic intelligence from a few, if indeed the imagination be left not only more free now to see these men as they were, but at the same time to see their whole character softened and sublimed to a more just and accurate painting than the mere narrator could present to us. Grasmere and Windermere were the centres; Rydal as a village was scarcely in existence then; Bowness, a little jutting Peninsula, without its stately Hotels, and Cabs, and Shops, and Pier; and Ambleside a very humble village. Windermere did not in those days receive on her breast the images of paltry Castles, or even of less pretensive and more chaste and humble dwellings, but her banks were frequented by men, who, without a figure, were, or were to be, the monarchs of the world's thought and feeling, and fancy. There was Wilson, the Editor of Blackwood, so wild, so frolicsome, so true, sound-hearted, and gentle; there was Scott, listening to criticisms on the author of Waverley, venturing some sly

opinions of his own amidst the covert glances of his companions; there was Wordsworth, held in a pretty general and universal contempt through the reading public, but listened to with a reverence, and affection, and homage by his friends, walking there by his side, who knew the future monarch, although not yet proclaimed and crowned; there was Coleridge, with his haggy head and bright large eye; his shambling gait, his ill dressed figure, his large lips, and his vast round of occult and gold tinged metaphysical discourse, "reaching before and after;" there was Southey, so genial so gentle, the dearest, wisest, narrowest, and most large hearted, and full headed dogmatist and bigot that ever lived; there, when he could get a holiday from the East India House came Lamb, stuttering and stammering, with his great weight of love, and laughter, and sorrow on his heart; and the rude and rugged Hogg; and many another beside came there; in those wild days of the Lakes these were the men who were seen there—such talkers, and such various talkers, there must have been a blaze of light if they did not extinguish each other. We know what the days of Johnson were—we know what the evenings of Holland House were; but surely here we should have seen greatness more in its undress in the simplicity of these rural quiets and shades.

In reviewing a life, of how slight importance seems a trip, or a tour; who thinks of noticing the casual acquaintance met with in the course of a week, or a month's travels, but to the Poet, these are ever im-

portant; they are trifles out of which character is built up, and in an Æsthetic Biography the notice of them is of the highest importance. All men who have travelled will recollect something of this, how important a memory is the first sight of a mountain, the first glimpse of the sea, and the haven of the sea crowded with ships, or the first night spent in a great city, or the first view of a mighty building, to minds able to perceive and to receive, the sight of a Feudal Castle in ruins, or an Abbey of the earlier or middle ages are objects which convey to the spirit influences imperishable; it frequently happens that a new scene arrests the course and current of thought and feeling, and gives to the whole being a new influence and character. In August 1803, Wordsworth, and his sister, and Coleridge, started on a tour into Scotland. In the life of our Poet by his nephew, there is to our mind no portion more interesting than the journal of the tour by Miss Wordsworth; it is very delightful, affectingly so, to read there, words penned just half a century since, there is a beautiful blending of vivacity and sensibility, with shrewdness of observation and some humour, all conveying to the mind a beautiful portrait of the gifted woman who penned the journal, and in the minute individuality of the painting presenting to us many charming scenes and delightful impressions; in this journal we have another instance, or rather many instances of the aid the Poet derived from his sister's sensibility, and his sister's eye.

We have heard much said about the poverty and misfortunes of Poets, but all his life-long Wordsworth may be called, an especially fortunate man. We have seen that when at the most critical period of his life, Raisley Calvert gave him a measure of worldly independency; in the year 1803 he became intimate with Sir George Beaumont of Coleorton, in Leicestershire, and this friendship continued until it was dissolved in time by the death of Sir George; he was one of the first to discover the genuis of Wordsworth, and Coleridge; and was the medium of bringing them together; his kindness to our Poet was shewn by munificent presents, he purchased a beautiful spot near Keswick Applethwaite, which he presented to Wordsworth. Sir George was one of the Poet's most intimately attached and valued friends, but probably not of sufficient strength of mind or character to exercise any influence over his friend's mind; he appears to be a beautiful type of the Old English Gentleman, living to cultivate refined tastes and acquaintances, and to improve his neighbourhood. Much of the time of the two friends appears to have been passed at each other's houses, and the character sketched of him in the Elegiac Stanzas suggests instantly the portrait of a truly noble and beautiful person. The following lines are a proof of the Poet's sensibility, and his friend's excellence, the Baronet, forbade any Epitaph to be placed on his tomb, excepting the words, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!" but when Wordsworth visited after his death, the

grounds made so sacred by social walks and wanderings, he could not forbear the verse, although he alludes in it to the repugnance of his departed companion to praise.

> "Such offering Beaumont dreaded and forbade,
> A spirit meek in self-abasement clad.
> Yet *here* at least, though few have numbered days
> That shunned so modestly the light of praise,
> His graceful manners, and the temperate ray
> Of that arch fancy which would round him play,
> Brightening a converse never known to swerve
> From courtesy and delicate reserve;
> That sense, the bland philosophy of life,
> Which checked discussion ere it warmed to strife;
> Those rare accomplishments, and varied powers,
> Might have their record among sylvan bowers.
> Oh, fled for ever! vanished like a blast
> That shook the leaves in myriads as it passed;—
> Gone from this world of earth, air, sea, and sky,
> From all its spirit-moving imagery,
> Intensely studied with a painter's eye,
> A poet's heart; and, for congenial view,
> Portrayed with happiest pencil, not untrue
> To common recognitions while the line
> Flowed in a course of sympathy divine;—
> Oh! severed, too abruptly, from delights
> That all the seasons shared with equal rights;—
> Rapt in the grace of undismantled age,
> From soul-felt music, and the treasured page
> Lit by that evening lamp which loved to shed
> Its mellow lustre round thy honoured head;
> While Friends beheld thee give with eye, voice, mien,
> More than theatric force to Shakspeare's scene."

Coleorton in Leicestershire occupies a very considerable place in the Biography of Wordsworth, there he spent

very much time. Sir George was a Painter of very considerable taste and power, and he illustrated the more early volumes of our Author's Works, he constantly evidenced his good will and kindness of feeling to the Poet, he relied upon his advice greatly in laying out the extensive gardens and park, he kept up a more friendly intercourse with him, and was desirous that he should be remembered more permanently, and therefore, upon his death in 1827, he bequeathed to Mr. Wordsworth the sum of £100 annually for the express purpose of a yearly tour. All these circumstances, and the terms of the Poet's Epitaph upon him, and his own selected inscription on his tombstone seem to unveil a character, one of the most beautiful and interesting, quiet and unostentatious, yet full of taste if not of genius, and bent on fulfilling the quiet round of noble duties.

It is impossible to resist a feeling, in reading the life of Wordsworth, of his coldness of temperament; attempting to judge him through the life by his nephew, we are amazed by the want of freshness and warmth, there is not one letter that glows with hearty and energetic life; it is true, he could not write, it was a labour and a penalty to him. Another proof if any were wanting, that his pleasure was in himself, and in his own volitions, he did not derive enjoyment from the communication of his ideas and feelings. We cannot apprehend that he had any care for praise or blame, fame had but little meaning to him, if ever a human heart merited the comparison of a closed grot, in a hidden

and almost inaccessible grove, his was that heart, warm no doubt, if you could reach it, some did reach it, but most never were able to turn aside the boughs or find the entrance to the cave. Concerning the very present of Sir George Beaumont to him of the Applethwaite Estate, he says, writing to Sir George. "If any person were to be informed of the particulars of your kindness to me, if it were described to them in all its delicacy and nobleness, and he should afterwards be told that I suffered eight weeks to elapse without writing to you one word of thanks or acknowledgement, he would deem it a thing *impossible*. It is nevertheless true. This is in fact the first time than I have taken up my pen, not for writing letters, but on any account whatever, except once, since Mr. Coleridge shewed me the writings of the Applethwaite Estate, and told me the little history of what you had done for me, the motives &c." We do not on this found any remarks on defect of character, the truth is, this is a trait belonging to a class of character with which we are seldom charmed, or even pleased, it quite sets aside our notions of what is agreeable and amiable, but at the same time belongs to the character in which we have more unhesitating confidence. Proud natures receive all that is done by or for them without any embarrassment, or sense of want or desert, they do not encumber or embarrass you with thanks, they move with all companies, even the very highest, and are instantly entirely at home, they are sustained by their own consciousness, they are not perhaps persons with whom you feel immediately at ease,

but they are persons on whom you can absolutely depend. When we were first introduced to Mr. Wordsworth, this impression of his character was upon us, every succeeding interview deepened it; there was a kingliness, a royalty in his bearing which we have never seen equalled, he was one of those men who attract man towards them by their evident pre-eminence in thought and character. Eminently one of those men on whom conferring a gift, you are struck with an impression as if instead you were receiving a gift from them, and before whom the mere gift presenter, whose present was not an act of homage and of love, found himself sadly dwarfed and shrivelled.

CHAPTER V.

MORAL SUFFERING AND INDIVIDUALITY.

"There seems to have been a period of Shakspere's life, when his heart was ill at ease, and ill content with the world or his own conscience, the memory of hours mispent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited, the experience of man's worser nature, which intercourse with ill-chosen associates, by chance or circumstances, peculiarly teaches; these as they sank down into the depths of his great mind seem not only to have inspired into it the conception of Lear and Timon, but that of one primary character, the censurer of mankind. This type is first seen in the philosophic melancholy of Jacques gazing with undiminished serenity, and with a gaiety of fancy, though not of manners, on the follies of the world. It assumes a graver cast in the exiled Duke of the same play."

HENRY HALLAM.

"(I had) a most emphatic feeling of my individuality—my insulated existence—except that close and interminable connection from the very necessity of existence with the Deity. To the continent of human Nature, I am a small island near its coast; to the Divine existence I am a Peninsula."

JOHN FOSTER.—*Journal.*

"His introverted spirit, bestowed
Upon his life an outward dignity
Which all acknowledged."

EXCURSION.

WE have before noticed how interesting it is to read the Biography of Wordsworth, as written by himself in his Poems—many of his Poems form the history of *his*

great adventures—they are the chronicles of the meetings and the musings which gave life to his mind. But in harmony of course with his character they are subjective. Thus, in that very fine Poem the Leech Gatherer, on the Lonely Moor. To a mind like that of our Poet, especially as we have described him in the early years of his life, there come moments of deep and bitter despondency when the spirit hangs wondering on the future, and life seems a dark, a most difficult and unsolved riddle. It was in such a moment among the mountains, when his spirit was reflecting their sternness, and cold and misty clouds hung brooding over his spirit, it was a time of strong and potent reaction, he had before been excited by enthusiastic dreams; the Poet rose after a night of storm, the wind had been roaring, and the rain fell in floods, but now over the whole face of nature came a change; the birds were chattering and singing among the trees, and the pleasant noise of waters echoed among the hills, the grass was bright with rain drops, and the hare run over the plashy and sedgy earth, it was the glad morning of a glad day after the turbulent and the troubled night; the Poet felt the gladness and the glory of the season—as happy as a boy was he—the roar of the distant woods and waters, the sky-lark warbling in the heavens, the beauty, the majesty, of nature only impressed him still more with the vanity of man, deep melancholy struck into his spirits, his former elevation was now the measure of his fall and prostration, he felt himself to be out of harmony with nature and with all her

gladness and her joy. How know I, reasoned he, how long it may be thus with me? The ghosts of poverty, and care, and solitude, and distress, and pain of heart, haunted him even on the bright morning. His meditations were the meditations of thousands of men, my whole life has hitherto been a summer mood, all things have come unsought to me, but how can I expect that it will be so with me for ever. If I take no heed of myself have I any right to expect that others will take heed of me, and then to confirm these impressions came the melancholy recollections of Chatterton "the Marvellous Boy,"

> "The sleepless soul that perished in his pride
> Of him who walked in glory and in joy,
> Following his plough along the mountain side."

He thought of the gladness with which their life began, and of its melancholy close, "despondency and madness." This is the most solemn and afflictive of human moods, this is that state of the soul in which we impeach Providence and make shipwreck of faith, and reasoning is useless to redeem from it; no cleverly constructed argument can avail, no ingenious rhetoric, nothing can impress the spirit like the spectacle of a soul in deeper distress than we are yet maintaining, a brave, and faithful, and heroic heart. And this spectacle was reserved for the Poet, he beheld in his distance beside a base black pool or tarn leaning against the sky, an old man, grey-headed, feeble, a very photograph of desolation, a being, half alive, half dead, bent double, prest by sickness,

leaning upon a piece of shaven wood; to such a mind as the Poet's in such a place, he would seem the very incarnation of the genius of desolation; our Poet made up to him and spoke, and found him quiet and courteous, not without that stateliness of speech, such as religion gives to all, even to the poorest and most ignorant of mankind; and gradually he unfolded that he was a Leech Gatherer, that he roamed from moor to moor, from pond to pond, and he found them less common than in days of old, but still he persevered; travelled, stirring the waters of the ponds about with his feet, still labouring on by the good help of God. In the Poem itself we can indeed see the man, there he is, no doubt allowed to settle on the clear lake of his calm spirit; in that desolation, hearing him speak thus, his shape seemed to Wordsworth like that of a messenger sent to him from some far region, with human strength, he was troubled by the old man's shape in that lone and solitary spot; and pacing to and fro he made the devout and unquestioning reliance upon the goodness of the great all father, he became instantly invested with high and sublime attributes in that solemn wood, covered with its gorgeous but prairie-like vesture of gorse, the infinite blue sky overhead, the waste of mountains all around, and the solitary tarn, and this man so utterly deserted there, and yet with his quiet deep heart of faith. The Poet laughed himself to scorn to find in this poor crippled wanderer so deep and fervid a trust that the emotion of his mind was answered, strength and resolution, and independence, were born

out of the gloom of heart and desolation of spirit through which he had passed. We have heard this piece ridiculed, but in truth, unadorned as it is, it has ever appeared to us most sublime, the piece is ragged, frowning, moor-like in its character, and that old man wandering to and fro, like a solitary bird over the heath, deriving consolation from the roar and wail of winds and waters there is something Hebraic, and in the grandeur of the Poem we are carried instantly to Elijah in his cave of the deep wilderness fed with ravens, yet relying unfaltering on him who met him by the brook of Cherith.

When it is affirmed that suffering is the gate by which we enter nature, and by which nature enters us; we only reiterate the lesson Schiller was so fond of inculcating, that feeling is all; or as Schlegel has with great eloquence affirmed, that it is the centre of unity in the mind*, and he must be the greatest Poet and the highest teacher, who is able to lay the largest range of faculties under contribution, to bring their varying testimonies in the most perfect balance. There is a poetry of suffering which rends our heart to witness, so intense, so prolonged and passionate is the agony, but we give to this the name of madness, because *that* suffering becomes in itself a centre, creating a rebellion in the mind, and does not bow in vassalage to a superior judgment, and to a higher and unitizing law. In the Retreat in York, some three or four years since, a man

* F. Schlegel. Philosophy of Language, Sec. II.

ordinarily peaceful, and gentle, but labouring under severe mental hallucinations, one day seized two watches, dashed them on the pavement, and of course broke them into innumerable shivers. The secretary of the Retreat on going round to the various wards called on him in the room where he was confined, and enquired of him why he had done so foolish a thing, and then he burst into tears, and in a wail of deep emotion, said, "Oh I could not bear to hear them, I did not want to destroy them, but it was too much, it was dreadful to hear them tick, tick, tick, it seemed as if every misery I had ever known or felt all my life were concentrated into every single tick, and I could not bear it any longer, indeed I could not, and I dashed them to pieces." Was not *that* suffering? Now if that intense agony, instead of venting itself and seeking a valve through destruction had been regarded through the cold æsthetic prism of genius, what colours, what hues, what soul shapes, and spiritual phantasms might have been given to the eye. Instead of a broken watch, we might have had a Hamlet. In North Wales a year or two since, some pedestrian wanderers turned on one side to visit a Welch Bard, a bard indeed, not a mere poetastic verse-monger, but a man whose poor thin clay tabernacle of heart contained in it terrific wild live lightnings. They found him in a cottage, a poor hovel in a miserable garden, at the feet of some of Cymri's most awful mountains, the garden was a picture of desolation, covered with weeds and nettles, his cottage empty of every thing but two or three books, and a harp on

which he woke his lightnings, and shivered, and fractured his words in curses and imprecations. How are you, said our friend? calling him by his bardic name. How are you? I see you are not well, are you in pain? "Pain," said he, speaking rapidly without a break, "Pain, if every nerve in my body were a devil, and every devil mad, I could not be in more pain, if all the dead in the church yard yonder were alive in their coffins, and all in pain, they could not suffer what I do. Look you, if you were to take all my pains and make a hole in Snowden and bury them, there, they would split him." And the poor fellow felt all these awful words. In frantic agony he would sweep his fingers over his harp and find in sound and song the solace for sorrow; but a greater than he would make those pains obedient to the commanding and superior will. The reader will not possibly, fail to remember the L'Envoi to Festus, he says,

> "——— The course of study he———
> Went thro' was of the soul rack. The degree
> He took was high: it was wise wretchedness.
> He suffered perfectly, and gained no less
> A prize than in his own torn heart to see
> A few bright seeds."———

This is great. But that wonderful Poem would have been still more wonderful if the emotions had been purified and strained through time; in other words, if passion and suffering had been rectified by thought. We do not demand of a Poet that he should suffer less, but that in proportion to his suffering he should think the more. Festus is like the wail of a spirit on the rack,

uttered in tones more or less deep or piercing, and varying as the objects vary, transitorily arresting its attention, but it is the wail of a spirit in which the impurities of suffering and passion mingle together. Suffering sublimes character, no man has sufficiently graduated to become a Teacher until he has suffered. But then we require that the routine of suffering should flow without turbidity and impurity; the waves of suffering should throw up to the eye the pearls of the deep not its sea weeds, and until the waves have become purified we cannot see the rocks, the caves round the dread sea monsters down below. Wordsworth does not exhibit to the eye traces of much suffering, unlike Schiller whose words scathe, and flash, and burn along his page. Schiller is pre-eminently the Poet of earnestness; and in no other do the tides of verse set in on the shores of humanity with so heavy a swell, and yet with so pure a purpose and transparent a power. Wordsworth and Schiller both, in their feeling held the central and controlling force of their genius, but the feeling of the Englishman is an emotion of complacency and benevolent sensibility; that of the German is of exalted and impassioned pain. Wordsworth soliloquises over his pictures or his woes; but Schiller will be heard by others; we feel while he speaks, and he is only heard when speaking to myriads—that he has only chained down the terrible hell dog Pain; he has his hand on the lion ready to spring upon him if once he removes his finger. But differing in the mode of their enunciation; and in the subjects of their enunciation no two

Poets ever agreed so much in determining and methodising their feelings before they allowed themselves to be betrayed into any utterance.

There is a beautiful and most graceful allegory of Leigh Hunt's in the Indicator, called the Nurture of Triptolemus—Triptolemus who first taught men to sow the earth with corn and reap its fruits. Triptolemus besought the goddess Demeter to become his tutor and his guide, and she conducted him through a course of trials, so severe that those who dared to make themselves spectators of his discipline, fainted and died beneath the spectacle; "gradual sorrow said she shall give birth to gradual joy." She restored his health, but she stretched him on a fiery rack in the midst of her temple; but by the roaring fire which scorched, burnt, and tormented him, his spirit was so expanded, his eyes so opened, that visions of surpassing wonder appeared before him, the first pains conducted him to Deformity, the analysis of things; but as the roar and blaze of the fire deepened beneath him, he passed on to the Wholeness and perfectness of things. Suffering became sublimed to Endurance; Endurance matured itself to immortal Strength. And thus was he fitted to go forth from the temple sowing joy wherever he went.

In the Apotheosis of Suffering, and the review of its relation to the great purposes of life, we may introduce some notice of "the White Doe of Rylstone," in which is seen the majesty of endurance and the final triumph of tranquil and patient waiting. Of all the Poems of Wordsworth there is not one, which depends more for

the hues it takes, upon the state of the readers mind, to the readers of Scott's Poetry, the admirers of the more glaring achievements of chivalry; how tame must seem this narrative of

> "A soul by force of sorrows high
> Uplifted to the parent sky
> Of undisturbed humanity."

We have always thought this Poem such an one as no man could perfectly love and appreciate. Jeffery extracted fine sport from it; in truth, it seems to need the delicacy, the tenderness of womanhood to love it; there runs through it a vein of subtle sentiment, perceptible and appreciated by refined and educated woman, born to suffer and endure; it is not the enthronement of personal prowess, nor the laudation of victory and martial heroism; on the contrary, it is a song of defeat, of hope lying prostrate, of gentle and lovely faith cast out to wander in the wilderness, unattended, save by purity and weakness, and yet, in all this the Poet perceives strength and power, in all this he beholds what really survives. And the good survives, although the suffering be transient, like the matchless Damascus steel which was said to be prepared from the burying old horse shoes in a damp cellar, the metals weaker portion perishing by oxydation, and the brighter particles then recognized shining amidst the brown rust, and thus it was said, was constructed the essence of the trenchant ore. Even so all suffering develops virtues, bright and vivid, but unknown, until tried by the rust

and the fire to which it submitted them. This we have said is the great lesson of the White Doe of Rylstone, and it is taught us with a grace and felicity of diction which might well disarm all criticism, even if the gorgeous passages, descriptive of the moon-light over the Wharf, the Church Yard, peopled and deserted, the Brother's Prophecy, the rearing of the consecrated Banner, and the development of the history and the tale were unavailing for that purpose. The consecrated Emily, whose

> "Duty is to stand and wait,
> In resignation to abide
> The shock, and finally secure,
> O'er pain and grief, a triumph pure."

Than this surely no Poet can teach a more sublime or celestial lesson.

It is more than probable that the White Doe of Rylstone was suggested to the writer by a very different Poem: the Hind and the Panther, of that illustrious but most graceless renegade and poet, John Dryden. No two Poems can be possibly more unlike; Wordsworth's is a lofty song of enduring faith, clear, spiritual, and elevating; Dryden's is a coarse and grovelling strain, half imprecation and half satire; both of the Poets intended to paint to their readers—Dryden in the Hind, and Wordsworth in the Doe—a patient and purifying faith and Church, and faith driven from its altars and shrines to the wilderness. And the introduction of the beautiful and emblematic creature in either Poem s somewhat similar—look at Dryden's.

"A milk white Hind, immortal and unchanged,
Fed on the lawns, and in the forest ranged,
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She feared no danger, for she knew no sin.
Panting and pensive now she ranged alone,
And wandered in the kingdoms once her own.
The common hunt though from their rage restrained,
By sovereign power her company disdained,
Grinn'd as they passed, and with a glaring eye
Gave gloomy signs of secret enmity.
'Tis true, she bounded by and tripped so light
They had not time to take a steady sight,
For truth has such a face and such a mien,
As to be loved needs only to be seen."

And thus Wordsworth introduces the beautiful subject of his Poem.

"Soft! the dusky trees between,
And down the path through the open green,
Where is no living thing to be seen;
And through yon gateway, where is found,
Beneath the arch with ivy bound,
Free entrance to the Churchyard ground—
Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,
Comes gliding in serene and slow,
Soft and silent as a dream,
A solitary Doe!
White she is, as lily of June,
And beauteous as the silver moon
When out of sight the clouds are driven
And she is left alone in heaven;
Or like a ship some gentle day
In sunshine sailing far away,
A glittering ship, that hath the plain
Of ocean for her own domain."

Here all resemblance ceases. The Hind and Panther

was a Poem very much to the taste of the critics of the Jeffrey School. We confess to ourselves it is painful labour to read it. The "Doe" was jeered, and mocked, and scoffed at by the Edinburgh Reviewers. Both Poets started with the same intention; namely, to vindicate and beautify an outcast faith. The Hind, of the Church of Rome; the Doe, of the Church of England. Each Poet gave what was given to him. The first, the Hind—a sad misuse of a meek and lovely creature,—becomes a cursing, swearing, lying, and by no means delicate special pleader, very well acquainted with history and a good many other things, making very bad use of every piece of knowledge, and inculcating scarce one lesson of sound and beautiful truth. The allegory is as badly maintained as any piece of literary bungling with which we are acquainted. Still it was Dryden's, and it suited Jeffrey. The Doe, never speaks, she glides to and fro through the Poem, over the graves of the Churchyard, over the rugged ridges of Rylstone Fell; among prostrate and defaced shrines, and fractured cells, and the sculptured forms of Warriors laid low; through the deserted halls, where the consecrated banner droops in folds by the side of the lovely Emily, or her brave brothers; through the aisles of Bolton, she glides by all, and through all, like an influence; and very dull, it seems to us, must that imagination be, that fails to perceive, in her milk white purity, now tremulously stealing through the moonlight, now bounding lightly through the open day, the beautiful shadow, the image of unsoiled trust, and faith, and cheerful

hope, born amidst adversities, strengthened by conflicting and conquering foes, rocked even into rest by the sufferings which threatened to tear all rest from the heart. The poor mean spirited, low hearted, and low thoughted artist, John Dryden, knew nothing of this, to him there was no glory in enduring patiently.* We have always felt a large measure of pity for those critics who have mocked at the beautiful White Doe of Rylstone.

It is in poems like that to which we have referred that we note an absence of interest in the drapery of things. The clothing of deeds—manners—actions—and the changing vestures of society scarcely appears to have affected the Poet at all; the changing hues of nations and of men—feudalisms and chivalries; the shock of the lance and the hurtling of spears—castles and abbeys, they affected him apparently more from their locality than their memory; he did not throw himself into the life of the past—"Let the dead bury their dead," his life was in the present; he made his own experience and observation the subject of his thought, and his painting; if he referred to the past it was to a great degree to divest it of all its local charm; all that

* If the reader should think the above estimate of Dryden too severe, the writer is content if the reader will suspend his judgment until he has read his Poems; meantime, he would fortify his position by referring to the occasional remarks and criticisms in Macaulay's History of England, vol. ii. 196—201. vol. iii. 23, 24, 25. Dryden was the Poet Laureate and the Pandarus to the most filthy age and school of our Literary History.

wizardry and romance which another hand might have woven around it; his life was not in the life of men—their ways and their usages, the shadows which course up and down the plain of human life, and give vividness and attraction, and interest to most minds from the excitement attending them. What is the lesson of the Borderers—of the White Doe of Rylstone—of the song of Brougham Hall? Is it not this? How superior to the turbid turmoil of man's ordinary affairs is the tranquil life; how powerful, and only powerful are those conspiring influences which work together their way through peaceful calms, to the distant and unseen, but more permanently felt action. There was too, it must be admitted, an almost morbid dread of change he did not see; that change is life—he did not see that only in the course of varying manners the mind ceased from sinking down into that monotonous experience which is the suicide of the soul—he longed therefore for the perpetually recurring samenesses of nature—nature at any rate was fixed, and nature alone. Her presence ever the same—immutable to him, to be made the subject of calculation, and this no doubt arose from the fact that he lived in an age when nothing appeared stable. Thrones the most venerable, seemed to be rocking around him; and customs, and usages, the most ancient, all appeared drifting through the same sea of change; nothing continued fixed. It led perhaps to an undue contempt or indisposition certainly to rightly estimate,—and especially in their Poetic or Æsthetic relations,—those folds of the robes of society which give

to social laws their power and their commanding sway with many people; true it is he shrunk away from the institutions of man, and would only find solace in the face of nature.

Sometimes it seems that the great defect of this poetry is, that there is not the evidence of sufficient suffering; the sublimest nature is that which can endure the severest sufferings and make them tributary to its education, but here there is no evidence of material sorrow; very little of moral, and little of mental. The writer appears to preserve a lake-like, and almost passionless repose; we frequently behold in life, and through the medium of the tragedian's power, a being rent as it were in twain, and we see through the rents, the forked and furious flames that scorch and tear the spirit; inasmuch as strength is the child of sorrow, there must have been much to bear and endure before many of his noblest tones could have been heard; but if he had been forced into more active collision with evils, if he had felt life to be more a daily battle, we dare not use such a sentence as monotony in reference to these productions, but they would have shown less unbroken, unvarying calm; he was of the Archangel race, who float up to their starry Empyrean and throne without wrestling with the foul spirits or contracting the stain of earthly dust and soil upon their wings as they float along. His experience of man was very peculiar—he was not deserted enough, although he saw the literature of his age fall from him on every hand, and heard the scream of wild and jocular reproach and reproof, he

perhaps never lost a friend by the condemnations, the most illustrious and opposite poets of his age were with him, and he was especially intimate with those colossal minds of his time whose spirits shone like full orbed and imperial suns over the whole hemisphere of European learning and language, thus he never entered into conflict with circumstances, thoughts, or things, and the calm which pervades his verse is the less instructive because it is not a calm to which he attained, but to which he was in a manner born. It is very noble to read the history of some great chosen and illustrious spirit passing through the fiery tribulation within and without; some men are to us as if a stout man-of-war ship had cast them overboard on a raft in the middle of the wide ocean, cast loose from all sympathy, all fellowship, all help, compelled to beat about by day beneath the scorching sun on the green briny sea, and by night over the dark and heaving waves. How many thousands of men are thus left, now coasting by a grim iron shore, repelled back by the breakers dashing along the rocks, now by some solitary island, casting forth its storms and streams of fire, and now by some fair lands, with smiling bay and beautiful creek, but covered by threatening savages, and stern and fierce visaged men; such is the destiny of the man who forsakes established usages, either in thought, or in manners. When he comes to the pleasant shore, is it not a goodly sight to behold him recounting his Pilgrim's Progress, and telling of the fearful night, and sea birds that flapped

his face with their wings, and the strange monsters that dashed about his crazy bark.

Ordinarily we may suppose that to such men all Poetry would be the prattle of childhood, and nothing more. At the prettynesses of jingling rhymes, we may very well conceive them laughing, and demanding some stronger feelings than those which merely bent themselves in a playful and merry stanza, but to a spirit long tossed by the billow and stormy wind, the pleasant gale and the soothing calm, and the sweet sight of the fresh and beautiful world are ever most pleasant, because they lull the soul to rest after its painful strivings and agonizings; there are passions men love to review, and to retrace, and there are passions once laid men do not like to renew or to repass, for fear they may be rekindled. This is certain, that he who is *on* the lonely and waste sea of passion or of unbelief, will indeed find nothing in the Poetry of Wordsworth in unison with his nature, for these are not songs to chaunt amidst the rattling hail of the war field, or the starless mountains of scepticism; the child of passion finds himself reproved on every page. They are not possessed of swift streams of active life, shooting through the blood and giving a fatal brilliancy to the eye, and a melancholy hectic to the cheek; before the words of these volumes can be enjoyed, the spirit must hear the roar and thunder of the breakers of passion in the distance, and feel at his feet the lave of the sweet waters of peace, and drink in his ear æolian murmurings, and music

from the thrill of spirit wings through the clear marble air.

Thus Wordsworth initiates us into the Priesthood of the Soul; the waters of his verse are cold and pure, and purifying; the doctrine that all true living begins in self-renouncement is very plainly set forth here; the Education of the Poet beginning as the education of every one begins, in purifying the spirit from the Use and the contact with the world, this is the lowest and least effort of the ascending mind, this unclothing, before wrestling; and the suffering involved here is trifling, but it is a kind of suffering; then we reach to the second period of the education of the soul when we learn to Know the world, and duly and properly to appraise men, and man, for there is much difference between the two, and whenever this state is perfected the heart ascends to world Love, and to feeling for the children of time with all their sorrows and their sins, not contempt but a pitying, nay, a passionate tenderness, and then will come the last stage, when we shall taste of the Cruelty of the world, its scorn, its hate, its evil word, its persecution, thus is the great Poet trained, thus is he fitted for the Sacrament of life, these Waters of the Four Wells purify his being, and add to his sensibility and his power, they give to him character in himself, and they enable him to bear that character right on through the very heart and mind of his fellow men. He only is a great Poet who has been guided to drink of the Four Wells. *

* Mrs. Browning's Vision of Poets.

The first efforts of Wordsworth's genius, his Lyrical Ballads, were called forth from a similar revolt of feeling as that which in Germany produced the Robbers of Schiller, both were a protest against the narrowness, the exclusiveness and conventionality of the age, the protest of Schiller was more daring, more unnatural, it created a thrill of excitement felt through all Germany, through all Europe, but its excitement deeply as it rouses the spirit, finely as it stirs the deepest impulses, is to a great degree false; the very universality of the praise, the instantaneousness of the impression is a proof of its inferiority. The Poems of Wordsworth were also the revolt of a conviction against a convention, but they partook of the gentleness of his character; and without attacking society in its debasements and deformities he contented himself by unfolding a hidden order of social beauties. Shepherds and Shepherdesses had been from time immemorial the frequent subjects of the Poets' verse, but the allusions to them had been in the vaguest train of generalities. Woodmen were always poetical objects in a picture, but the merit of Wordsworth lay in giving to them a place among human hearts, he denounced thus the paltry divisions, fencing off human families, he painted a refinement caught from the spirit, and not from society or education; and without satirising the powder and the paste, the tawdry silk, and the gleaming gewgaw of fashionable life, he vindicated the ploughman's, and the peasant's place among human hearts.

Now that we can sit down and look at the portrait

he has given us of himself, and how it was painted, and how the character was built up, one cannot but use the freedom of the biographer to wonder at many things we do not find developed to us. In the Prelude, as the reader knows, the portrait is sketched at great length; it is in fact a mental Autobiography, and it would be merely the unreasoning compliment of a mind not accustomed at all to draw analogies between its own volitions and emotions, and those of other men, to say that nothing is wanting in it, that it is a life entirely attracting our sympathy; the first thing that strikes us is its spontaniety; all things seem to grow out of the man's own mind, we may even say it is not a reflected intellect of which we are reading the history. The clouds, the stars, the flowers, the human hearts around the poet, these are the reflectors; thought shoots up from its own organism to life: no poet seems so fully to impel one to the belief in innate ideas, we are something disturbed by the perpetual iteration of the one mind, it peoples all space, and throws its own peculiar light on all things.

In perusing the works of the author the reader will not fail to notice that he is haunted by a more vivid sense of his Individuality than any writer of English poetry according to the mind of the reader, this will seem to some the glory, to others the defect of his writings: some have called it the egotism of our writer, the tendency to throw the shadow of his own life and being over every object in nature, it is this which we have already reverted to when we contrasted subjective

and objective poetry, it was a favourite idea of our writer's, and he has invested the thought in very beautiful verse, that natural objects do materially affect the mental and moral being of men, and that Men are in a very eminent degree what they are made by the locality around them, and this is true in many instances, but we question whether there ever was a poet who existed less by derived life than Wordsworth; over every object he brooded, and coloured and clothed it in the hues of his own mind. No poet has written so much about himself; in no poet does the first person singular so frequently occur; his mind is a mirror, and he reports to us faithfully the appearance of every object moving over the glass. It is at the same time important to notice that the objects partake most of the medium over which they pass.

Perhaps not many of our readers will at first sympathise with us in saying that in this particular of the individuality of all his impressions, and mental character he was very much like John Foster, that extraordinary man, to whom as yet no justice has been done—one of the most instructive and powerful thinkers of our age; he was so much like Wordsworth that we could almost read the one mental life for the other; he never translated his thoughts into verse, nor did he ever present to the world any formal attempt at Autobiography, but the linear hints remind us of the striking resemblance. On John Foster no propitious fortunes smiled, his birth place was a wild retired mountain solitude in Yorkshire, he entered the world the same year as Wordsworth; he

never had the advantages of early education or training, no University opened its portals for him, no great success attended his writings, yet we find a measure of sensibility, dare we say in the character of it, equal, though inferior in its utterance; what we notice now is the Individuality of the man; his biographer says his imagination was imperious and tyrannical, but in truth neither in the one case nor the other is it imagination alone that arrests us, but intense Individuality. In his childhood, going to bed was an awful season of each day; his boyhood was haunted by ghosts raised from his reading; he feared lest a skeleton should meet him, each night in a room through which he had to pass, and frequently beheld the spectacle of Indians tortured at the stake; he could not sit upon a stool belonging to a man who had died in a strange and sudden way, and whose ghost was said to haunt the spot; single words haunted him; the word Hermit could at any time he says, transport him to a solitary hut, surrounded by shady, solemn groves mossy rocks, crystal streams, and gardens of radishes; through many pages does his biographer carry us with suggestions of his power of brooding over images and things; but let the reader who loves this kind of study procure, if he has not procured, his journal, and read it. He was a man more intensely occupied with self perhaps than even Wordsworth. Like Wordsworth, he gazed upon scarcely an object in nature that did not suggest a moral analogy; like Wordsworth, he knew more of the weight of thoughts than of words; like him he was studious rather to

> "Perceive great truths,
> Than touch and handle little ones;"

like Wordsworth, his mind was a mountain chapel; he had none of the poet's advantages, he had not the advantage of a beautiful realm of nature through whose domain he could walk; he had no fame, no wealth, no honours were heaped on him; they were both secluded Hermits, with this difference, that the Hermit of the Lakes was frequently called to enter the most lofty and polished society; sometimes to enter Palaces; to be crowned in Universities, while his cell was visited by the Scholars of the age for instruction, and Knights, who sometimes reined in their horse to turn aside to look upon the recluse of Rydal Mount, but no such messages; no such visitants, diverted the attention of the Hermit of Frenchay; to him it was one life-long self-communion save when some dissenting brother less starched than most, turned aside for a brief hour's conversation. The æsthetic life of Foster was very remarkable; a desultory and vague dream, those deep sunk, melancholy eyes looked through all things, but looked into all things with a gloom born from a life passed, we must think with scarcely any kindred sympathy. And thus this great life passed away musing and poring over all things, it may be with too microscopic an eye, reflecting on all things too much the colour of a mind deeply self-conscious, and compelled partially by an organic temperament, and partially by a stern and moody theology to take a dismal view of things, and events, and destinies, until even the most

innocent and lovely objects in nature became the ministers of dread to the spirit. We have dwelt somewhat too long on this great man for episode in our biography, but he illustrates more than any other writer with whom we are acquainted, ancient or modern, that mysterious haunting of the soul by its shadow, which is the distinctive fact of Wordsworth's mind—the difference being that to Wordsworth the shadow is the reflection of nature and the sun, while in Foster we are startled by a shape walking by his side, when there is no sun in the heavens, even as sometimes in our daily rambles our own shadow is reflected, not from the sun immediately, but from a moody cloud, concealing the sun from our eyes.

And as the Poems themselves result from an entire individuality of feeling, a perfect and utter absorption in the subject, so an individuality almost as entire is needed for the perusal of them; and this immediately lets us into the secret of their unpopularity, and suggests to us that they never can be popular extensively; most persons find an interest in excitement, and that Poetry pleases most which most rapidly conveys them from place to place, and thought to thought—the mind does not need a resting place—nay, it is perhaps quite indisposed for a resting place, it is thankful for those objects, not which arrest the attention, but which divide it; it does not seize one image, one thought, one subject, and follow it forth intensely, but it loses itself in a perfect garden, a wilderness it may be, of indefinite forms. Hence, most of those persons who in reading, exclaim,

how pretty, how beautiful, how fine, have no clear idea what it is on which they are pronouncing their favourable judgment; it is a general impression, it may be a music in the sound, possibly the very confusion and variety of objects may please. But to read Wordsworth's Poetry is not only a pleasure dim and shadowy, it is a mental exercise, to enjoy it you must abandon yourself to it, it demands abstraction as the price of pleasure; it is not that order of Poetry with which you may kill time, there is a mighty charm in it, but the charm only works when it has imposed silence on the spirit and washed the eyes in the euphrasy and rue of tranquil meditation.

And here we remark in illustration, our observations, that Books had but little power over Wordsworth. In a review of the æsthetic life of a man, Books may be expected to have some considerable place, and one canto of "The Prelude" is devoted to books, but it is written from such a view as to assure us, if we did not know it before, that Wordsworth was no Bookman, in the ordinary sense of that word,—no greedy and voracious devourer of pyramids of volumes. The man who is fond of conversing with his own volitions, and of investing nature with the drapery of his own imagination, rarely is a great reader. Milton may perhaps seem an exception, but we suspect that his reading was great, much more in the dignity and worth, than the surface and extent of it. Wordsworth was no such reader as Milton, his knowledge of books was meagre, his knowledge of nature was most extensive, he had little regard

even for the wealthy pages of history, he assures us that the stories of villagers, and the cottage fireside tales interested him more, and sometimes suggested to him greater emotions; and this would certainly be the case with the modern style of history in which the narrative is degraded to a mere fact, and the moral is found mostly in the date; so of philosophy, the springs of his action and research were not intensified or directed by mere book lore, they were from within; with modern philosophy he had but little sympathy, for he could not see the greatness of submitting the universe to the pin of the microscope; he was an inductive philosopher, but his inductions were founded, as a Poet's reasoning will be founded, on a broader survey of facts, and widening into a more extensive generalization.

Meantime we have no account of any Book that especially affected the course of his thought, and his opinion. And again, perhaps we ought to say that strongest minds will not allow themselves to be materially influenced *by a* book. Minds pent up from opportunities of study and self-communion will sometimes date their whole mental history from the day, when a certain book crossed their path like a flash of lightning, it revealed the whole road, and their relation to it. But it very frequently happens that it is at the expense of the whole life-long moral health; the stroke was too severe. No such event happened in Wordsworth's history, his earlier readings had been confined to works of fiction, and these he is most lavish in commending, as keeping the springs of the spirit fresh and open;

his scholarship was respectable, but not remarkable, he felt of course the fire darting words of Homer, the graceful flow of Virgil, the moral grandeur of Eschylus and Sophocles, and the philosophic grace and ease of Horace, but he had no acquaintance with the stream of the world's Literature; and modern books, excepting books of travel, it would seem he was all but entirely ignorant of. He seems to have stood affected by even the evanescence of books, as compared with what, by a bold figure of speech, may almost be called the eternity of Nature. He felt her power, untouched by change that he could observe, or that man could record. She sufficed for him, and in her presence he felt a higher repose and consolation.

Thus in illustration of our author's regardlessness of books, we have the following almost curious extracts: both from letters to Archdeacon Wrangham. "You astonish me with the account of your books; and I should have been still more astonished if you had told me you had read a third (shall I say a tenth part?) of them. My reading powers were never very good, and now they are much diminished, especially by candle light; and as to *buying* books, I can affirm that in *new* books I have not spent five shillings for the last five years, i.e. in Reviews, Magazines, Pamphlets, &c. &c.; so that there would be an end of Mr. Longman, and Mr. Cadell, &c. &c., if nobody had more power, or inclination to buy than myself. And as to *old* books, my dealings in that way, for want of means, have been very trifling. Nevertheless, small and paltry as my

collection is, I have not read a fifth part of it. I should, however, like to see your army,

> 'Such forces met not, nor so wide a camp,
> When Agrican, with all his *northern* powers,
> Besieged Albracca, as *romances* tell.'

Not that I accuse you of romancing; I verily believe that you have all the books you speak of. Dear Wrangham, are you and I ever like to meet in this world again? *Yours* is a *corner* of the earth; *mine* is *not* so. I never heard of any body going to Bridlington; but all the world comes to the lakes."

Again, we have in the same year, 1819, a similar confession. "I have so much to do with writing, in the way of labour and profession, that it is difficult to me to conceive how anybody can take up a pen but from constraint. My writing-desk is to me a place of punishment; and, as my penmanship sufficiently testifies, I always bend over it with some degree of impatience. * * * * * * As to my occupations, they look little at the present age; but I live in hope of leaving something behind me that by some minds may be valued.

"I see no new books except by the merest accident. Of course your Poem, which I should have been pleased to read, has not found its way to me. You inquire about old books: you might almost as well have asked for my teeth as for any of mine. The only *modern* books that I read are those of Travels, or such as relate to matters of fact; and the only modern books that I

care for; but as to old ones, I am like yourself—scarcely anything comes amiss to me. The little time I have to spare—the very little, I may say—all goes that way. If, however, in the *line of your profession* you want any bulky old Commentaries on the Scriptures (such as not twelve strong men of these degenerate days will venture —I do not say to *read*, but to *lift*,) I can, perhaps, as a special favour, accommodate you."

Yet he of course had faith in the power of Great Books, though he no doubt knew that nature was the greatest of all, furnishing from her stores the hard fact of Mathematics and the beautiful dream of Poetry.

We have not anywhere a more remarkable painting of Fact and Fancy in the book of life then in the following Romance of the Stone and the Shell.

"Once in the stillness of a summer's noon,
While I was seated in a rocky cave
By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,
The famous history of the errant Knight
Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts
Beset me, and to height unusual rose,
While listlessly I sate, and, having closed
The book, had turned my eyes toward the wide sea.
On Poetry and Geometric truth,
And their high privilege of lasting life,
From all internal injury exempt,
I mused; upon these chiefly; and at length,
My senses yielding to the sultry air,
Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream.
I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
And as I looked around, distress and fear
Came creeping over me, when at my side,

Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared
Upon a dromedary, mounted high.
He seemed an Arab, of the Bedouin tribes:
A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
A Stone, and in the opposite hand a Shell
Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight
Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide
Was present, one who with unerring skill
Would through the desert lead me; and while yet
I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight
Which the new-comer carried through the waste
Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone
(To give it in the language of the dream)
Was 'Euclid's Elements;' and 'This,' said he,
'Is something of more worth;' and at the word
Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape,
In colour so resplendent, with command
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,
And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
A loud prophetic blast of harmony;
An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the children of the earth
By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased
The song, than the Arab with calm look declared
That all would come to pass of which the voice
Had given forewarning, and that he himself
Was going then to bury those two books:
The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
Of reason, undisturbed by space or time;
The other that was a god, yea many gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, with power,
To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,
Through every clime, the heart of human kind.
While this was uttering, strange as it may seem,
I wondered not, although I plainly saw

The one to be a Stone, the other a Shell;
Nor doubted once but that they both were Books,
Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt
To cleave unto this man; but when I prayed
To share his enterprise, he hurried on
Reckless of me: I followed, not unseen,
For oftentimes he cast a backward look,
Grasping his twofold treasures.—Lance in rest,
He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
He, to my fancy, had become the knight
Whose tale Cervantes tells; yet not the knight,
But was an Arab of the desert too;
Of these was neither, and was both at once.
His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed;
And, looking backwards, when he looked, mine eyes
Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
A bed of glittering light; I asked the cause:
'It is,' said he, 'the waters of the deep
Gathering upon us;' quickening then the pace
Of the unwieldy creature he bestrode,
He left me: I called after him aloud;
He heeded not; but, with his twofold charge
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view,
Went hurrying over the illimitable waste,
With the fleet waters of a drowning world
In chase of him; whereat I waked in terror,
And saw the sea before me, and the book,
In which I had been reading, at my side."

But we must hasten forward. Wordsworth was smitten by two great griefs in his life in 1805—he lost his brother, Captain John Wordsworth; he stood high in his brother's esteem and regard. He writes to Sir George Beaumont: "My poor sister, and my wife who loved him almost as much as we did (for he was one of

the most amiable of men) are in miserable affliction, which I do all in my power to alleviate; but heaven knows, I want consolation myself, I can say nothing higher of my ever dear brother, than that he was worthy of his sister who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge; meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a Poet in every thing but words." Some of the passages from Wordsworth's letters at this time and in connection with this event greatly interest us, they show how capable he was of acute sorrow and suffering; the following is very interesting. "As I have said, your last letter affected me much. A thousand times I have asked myself, why was he taken away? and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact, there is no other answer which can satisfy and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the supreme governor? Why should our notions of right towards each other and to all sentient beings within our influence differ so widely from what appears to be his notion and rule, *if every thing were to end here?* Would it not be blasphemy to say that upon the supposition of the thinking principle being *destroyed by death*, however inferior we may be to the great cause and ruler of things we have *more of* love in our nature than he has. The thought is monstrous, and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the

supposition of another and a better world, I do not see. As to my departed brother, who leads our minds at present to these reflections, he walked all his life pure among the impure, except a little hastiness of temper, when any thing was done in a clumsy or bungling manner, or when improperly contradicted upon occasions of not much importance, he had not one vice of his profession. I never heard an oath or even an indelicate expression or allusion, from him in my life; his modesty was equal to that of the purest woman. In prudence, in meekness, in self-denial, in fortitude, in just desires, and elegant and refined enjoyments with an entire simplicity of manners, life, and habit, he was all that could be wished for in man, strong in health, and of a noble person, with every hope about him that could render life dear, thinking and living for others, and we see what has been his end! So good must be better, so high must be destined to be higher."*

* Life. vol. i. 293.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAND OF WORDSWORTH.

"SOLE KING OF ROCKY CUMBERLAND."

"But most of the subjects of Mr. Wordsworth, though not arrayed in any adventitious pomp, have a real and innate grandeur. True it is, that he moves not among the regalities, but among the humanities of his art. True it is, that his poetry does not 'make its bed and procreant cradle' in the jutting frieze, cornice, or architrave of the glorious edifices of human power. The universe in its naked majesty, and man in the plain dignity of his nature, are his favorite themes. And is there no might, no glory, no sanctity, in these; Earth has her own venerablenesses, her awful forests, which have darkened her hills for ages with tremendous gloom; her mysterious springs, pouring out everlasting waters from unsearchable recesses, her wrecks of elemental contests; her jagged rocks, monumental of an earlier world. The lowliest of her beauties has an antiquity beyond that of Pyramids. The evening breeze has the old sweetness which it shed over the fields of Canaan, when Isaac went out to meditate. The Nile swells with its rich waters towards the bulrushes of Egypt, as when the infant Moses nestled among them, watched by the sisterly love of Miriam. Zion's hill, has not passed away with its temple, nor lost its sanctity amidst its tumultuous changes around it, not even by the accomplishment of that awful religion of types and symbols, which once was enthroned on its steeps. The sun to which the Poet turns his eye is the same which shone over Thermopylæ; and the wind to which he listens swept over Salamis, and scattered the armaments of Xerxes."

SIR T. N. TALFOURD.—*Lectures on Wordsworth.*

FROM what has been said, and from the reader's personal knowledge of these Poems, he will gather that they overflow with allusions to the whole country in which the writer had ever lived. The land of Wordsworth is

even yet more strongly marked and outlined than the land of Burns or Scott; the greatest however of our modern Poet's have had no especial country, they have lost sight of their own in their verse. Wordsworth has planted the laurels of immortality on hundreds of places, to which in future years pilgrimage will be made for the sake of his verses, and his memory; he might perhaps have been a greater Poet had it not been so; it is wonderful to notice how he turned every subject into the occasion of music, his genius resembles the power of those musicians who from pieces of Cornish granite or limestone rock draw forth sweet sounds; there is no object over which he cannot instantly pour a mingled stream of music and thought, but this constant placing of insects upon the microscopic pin must have prevented him from ranging his feelings and his observations beneath some great generalization; he did not emulate however the magnificence of the Cartoon, he was satisfied with the exquisite and highly finished Medallion, he had read many of the Italian Poets apparently, and gave forth his words in a similar manner, in forms of beauty rarely surpassed, but whose character partook rather of the photograph than the painting.

Localised impressions! how many of these we have in Wordsworth's writings, and it is this which makes his Land so interesting. May we not say that he presents to us the æsthetics of travel, over every place he visits he throws the mantle of his peculiar poetic fervour and makes every spot a platform on which to discuss a doctrine, or to inculcate a duty, or to analyse a sensa-

tion. No Poet so constantly and incessantly presents to his reader the objects of thought, every spot is tributary, every place is a shrine, and perhaps we have too much of this—in it Wordsworth is almost alone. Shakspere has no locality, nor Schiller, nor Milton, impressions are absorbed in the wholeness of the individual being. Wordsworth allows for the time his being to be absorbed by the scene; it contains his whole manhood, it reflects his whole life, witness in his early days, Tintern Abbey; in the closing years the musings near Aqua pendente; it is as we have said, individuality is the essence of his poetry, he felt too intensely to know and to feel universally; standing by Rob Roy's grave he conjures up the spirits of despotism and democracy, and round him

> "Kingdoms shift about like clouds
> Obedient to his breath."

He discusses the principles of government, as he clears the nettles from the tomb of the Highland Chieftain; he wakes up the slumbering forms of the world's dead kings, and utters in their ears the great battle words of humanity. When he visits the pleasure ground of Dunkeld, the representation of Mimic waterfalls, near the grave of Ossian, rouses not merely a burst of passionate indignation for the folly of that artifice, but some of the most glorious words ever uttered on the folly and criminality of similating a love of nature, and mocking the mind with false, fictitious, and meretricious sentiment. This power of localizing impressions is shown especially

in the memorials of the tours in Scotland, and in Italy, in many of his Sonnets, and indeed characterises in an eminent degree more or less the whole of his poetry; every place touched some responsive spring in his nature, and the place, the spot, the object instantly became ideal; all objects he surrounded with the golden fire mist, and the rain-bow hued gleams of his fancy and genius, he presented nothing naked or unclothed, all things were dressed in the imaginative vesture, they became to him something more than themselves, he saw far more in them than met ordinary eyes; they became to him centres of feeling, from them thought took flight to a great round of conception and association; from a flower, or a broken stone his mind shot up in a long range of concentric and spiral rings until it touched the topmost stars, yet never losing sight of the point or the foundation from which he sprung; beneath his genius the meanest objects became suns shooting forth planets of moral truth, to hold their circumvolving course around the central light.

It is a question much mooted whether the Poet should be a hermit, a recluse, and solitary, whether he should retire from the walks and ways of men and live alone, feeding thought from his scallop shell of quiet, through the deep dark winter and the bright summer hours; whether cities, or solitudes, most call forth and develope the resources of man's nature. For ourselves we do not feel disposed either to moot or to discuss the question, but perhaps it may be said that the Poet will avail himself most of the resources in solitude, with

which he has furnished himself in society. Let the Poet give us honestly what he himself has felt, tasted, and handled either in the city or in the fields, and it cannot come amiss. No two men are educated in the same way, no two Poets can be educated in the same way, the inner life determines the course of the education; put two seeds into the same spot of earth, and how different the result, how different even if both be one fruit or flower, the value of the Poet is in his honest individual inner life as a contribution to the experience and stock of our common humanity. You can lay down no law for the education of Poets, and speak of no scenery as especially fitted for their training, for they of all men on this earth will educate themselves, they are hardy plants, they will convert all soils, all seasons, all atmospheres into nutritive substances—it is the province of the great Poet to make his own world—to look at things as they are in truth, and in themselves.

But Wordsworth was not so much a Hermit as was Goethe at Frankfort, the Recluse may not therefore necessarily be cut off from all sympathy with his world and his fellow-men. The Hermit may live, yet not hermitically sealed from all human intercourse, from the entrance into the walks, and ways, and words, of mankind; nay, he may have sought his cell from the loving desire to meditate on them and their ways, he may walk to and fro, longing to break the shell of the difficult problem perplexing and agonising man, he may be made acquainted with men too, for if reflection comes to his cell, it is equally certain that passion will

find its way there, St. Hugo said, "Monastics make cloisters to enclose the outward man, O would to God they would do the like to restrain the inward man." And because they cannot do this, because Man entering the Hermit's cell cannot leave his manhood behind; nay, perhaps gives it the reins and makes it more potent over him, because we understand men better as we see them at a distance, and not in the mass, but in the individual; and because we love men best as we are farthest removed from them too, for all these reasons it may be affirmed that the life of the recluse is more favourable to instruction than the life of the citizen. Reflection gives then intensity to action, and strips life of the meretricious charms, of which in the crowded city even the Poet can scarce withstand the influence.

It is very beautiful to sit down with our author and to realise from his pages a life that has almost, nay, that in many phases of it, has altogether passed away. Consider, it is nearly one hundred years since our Poet was born, it is quite eighty years since he was with his schoolmates, sporting on the banks of Esthwaite Lake, At that time and for many years after

> "The housewife plied her own peculiar work,
> Making the cottage through the silent hours
> Murmur as with the sound of summer flies."

But that useful and antique old Spinning wheel whirling through the long hours by the ingle corner has however long since gone. There is no "Benjamin the Waggoner" now. Pickford's Van was an improvement

on Benjamin, but even Pickfords have been compelled to yield to the spirit of the times. See the

> "Companions of the night and day,
> Who have trod the toilsome way,
> The far off tinkling drowsy cheer
> Mixed with a faint, yet grating sound,
> In a moment lost and found,
> The Wain announces."

Years, nay ages, hence many of the lines of Wordsworth will be quoted as illustrations of local usages, of ancient manners, and traditions long obsolete. The description of the village funeral*, the dirge chaunted on the way to the grave, not by priest or white-robed choristers, but by the inhabitants of the hills; the cadence rising mournful, clear, and slow, out of the deep heart, in the abyss of the mountain as the traveller journied to his last resting place: here in these verses lie the records of Rush bearings and Well flowerings. Confirmations and Consecrations of Churches, and descriptions of the cottage and the household furniture of the last century, when all life was plain and unadorned; those days

> "When no vain mirror glittered on the walls,"

but "when snow white curtains hung in decent folds," and the mats were made of tough moss, and long enduring mountain plants braided together, when the carpets were made of homespun wool, and the parlour

* Excursion.

floor of the pastoral homestead boasted no better foundation than the blue slabs of mountain stone; these hints of the last century life are scattered very plentifully over these works, they are interesting glimpses of the old world, a world now in almost every particular left behind; for even into the most untrodden of those dales to which they principally refer, to Wastdale, or Ennerdale, or Buttermere, or Borrowdale, what we call the spirit of the age has passed, removing much, preserving much; a new life has poured its waves along those valleys, those mountains have echoed to sounds then unknown, and the "Excursion" is the painting of a transitive age, a passage from the simplicity of the eighteenth, to the excitement of the nineteenth century.

And so the reader must realize to himself a wholly different country to that which now he knows; it is needless to say that all our modern improvements and inventions were unknown. No line of railway had been reared, no steam boat launched, no cluster of tall chimneys had tainted the air or given a new direction and life to commerce; as to the lakes, those regions where Mr. Wordsworth fixed his home, to nearly all England, noble, gentle, commercial, and plebeian, they were a "*terra incognita*," they were a land of darkness, a Kerguelens Island of desolation; only a few years had elapsed when Mr. Wordsworth first began to write, since Gray had ventured there, and in some measure called attention to the Alpine Grandeur, the Anglo Genevan beauty of that far north land, but then it was for the most part inaccessible; from distant ages the

statesmen of those hills and dales had formed a kind of rude Republic; our fathers were affected by the history of the dwellers in Cambria and Westmoreland much as we are affected this day who hear the deeds of the brave Montenegrins, and read descriptions of the mountain passes of the Balkans; of the dwellers in Dalmatia and in Servia; at present every thing exists in the Lake district to make it a most attractive and desirable spot to the young man from London, or Manchester, or Birmingham, whose time and means alike are limited, but who desires to see some of the noblest scenes of nature in miniature, and to have reared before him a small platform on which he may contemplate what those awful mountain ranges may be, for ever shut from his eyes. True even now he may lose his way among the hills, he may be overtaken by mists far from any shepherd's hut; far from any human habitation to be reached by his voice; there are dangerous and precipitous pieces of mountain cliff it would not even now be desirable to scale, but every thing upon the whole is very innocent, and the whole of the round of mountain, moor, and tarn, may be warranted free from any danger, except to those who are very rash and romantic indeed; not so at the close of the last and the beginning of the present century; many a forest tree has yielded since then to the cultivating hand of civilization; many a road has been made pleasant and accessible to the traveller's feet; many an inn reared in the neighbourhood of wild and desolate magnificence; many a field and farm if not actually added to the spot, has assumed a neat and more desira-

ble aspect; it is within the eighty years that the last Eagles fled before the advance of man.

The Land of Wordsworth, especially including Cumberland and Westmoreland, the North of Yorkshire, and some parts of North Lancashire, forms indeed a peculiar and remarkable territory of Great Britain, a portion of the country where nature is seen in our land on the most bold and magnificent scale, and where rural and primitive customs have lingered longest. It will be remembered that Wordsworth was a link between three generations, his writings however and their relation to the locality he inhabited described it rather as it was in the middle and close of the eighteenth century, the whole life was then different to what it is now—it is the life, the reader will see of a hundred years since—there is not a particular in which the country is the same, in that age people wore very little cloth indeed that was not home-spun, and the fleeces of their flocks, also spun at home, furnished the rest of their apparel; the females of every family knit part of the yarn into stockings, and the remainder of it was manufactured by a neighbouring farmer into a kind of duffil for the clothing of the men, and a sort of russet for the use of the women. How should we be surprised, did we look into those old farm houses and cottages where the women were working up the raw material into domestic uses of various kinds. All apparel seems to have been wrought up at home, it was apparently a poor time, wages were very low, and yet by the virtue of economy the poor performed wonders. Plain was the apparel, the

houses too were plain, the traveller may see them still; on the side of hills, by the banks of brooks and rivers, they seem many of them not to have been remarkable for their weather tightness—rude buildings very easily constructed; the fire constantly kindled from turf or peat, and the exposure to the elements, making the hat a very useful article of clothing in doors, and the furniture was of a piece with the house, the modern housewife would find few of those conveniences apparently so indispensable now; wardrobes and dressing tables were not as yet known, but in the stead, long rudely carved chests, where were deposited the clothes of the family—and the malt, oatmeal, and dried meat—we are speaking it will be seen of families tolerable well off in the world; refinement did not then as now draw a line of separation between the various members of the family, all were found in the same room, and the distinction between the ranks was maintained in quite another way than by the artificial distinctions our modern manners have imposed; all the furniture was heavy, mostly massive oak, wooden vessels were eaten from and drunk out of; there were no light chairs, no chiffoniers, none of those delicacies which make now the household-room so winning, and comfortable a place. The Cabinet Maker was as almost unknown as a magician; the fire-side at winter would present characteristics now scarcely ever seen in England, perhaps not to be met with at all; the corner of the chimney was furnished with benches for four or five persons, and a screen was generally placed round them to ward off the blasts and cold airs from

the badly jointed doors, and there, were told the tales to which childhood listened, shivering, to tales of witchcraft, and of fairies; the aged crone, or the old man would delight to awaken in the young the impressions awakened in their own mind by similar tales in the first days of their youth or childhood; meantime perhaps some more lusty and high spirited would be found in the middle of the floor, hunting the rolling-pin, at that time a very common game; on rare occasions there was the posset cup, and among the old, the game of cards, which lasted the better part of the night; clocks too were quite unknown in most of the districts of the lakes; the people of the mountains followed all their occupations by the light of the stars, by the sun and the moon, this may seem to our ideas strange, but there are many places yet where the clock has only been recently introduced. In that state of society there were few who were separated from their neighbours by the possession of a very much larger amount of property, and when all were equals there could not be a great amount of refinement, for that springs from the habits of those who enjoy a superiority of fortune or education, which usually arises from that superiority—nor must we forget to mention a peculiarity of the property of the Lakes. The west moorlands were said to be the retreat of the Saxons, but it is evident, that that Ethnographical distinction does not rightly distinguish the race, the first residents were rather it may be presumed of Scandinavian of Danish or Norwegian descent, there is a greater proportion of names and terminations which fix the

origin of a locality as Scandinavian than in any other part of England except Lincolnshire, and perhaps the proportion is not greater there, when the populations of the two Counties, Westmoreland and Cumberland, as compared with Lincolnshire, are taken into consideration.*

In these dales and hills the traveller will find few if any remains of Norman Feudalism, the Feudalism of the Castle and the Villain, yet there are traces of another kind of homage, the walls, the divisions of the property of the Dalesmen are the enclosures of land granted from the wealthy Abbeys of the neighbourhood to emancipated serfs for protecting them from wolves, and holding themselves engaged to go to the wars; the very word Dalesman it is said does not arise from the dales of the region, but from the word *deyler*, which means to distribute; and the crofts have been held mostly for many generations, thus the descent of the occupants of the soil is very remarkable, and their independence has been guaranteed to them in a peculiar manner for centuries, the life has been one of singular seclusion. This life in many of its features our Poet has attempted to paint in a series of Mountain Idylls, but it is necessary indeed in order perfectly to realise the life and beauty of the Poems, to understand the moral peculiarities of the locality not less than the physical; the one has, and has ever had, as marked peculiarities as the other, and the character of the scenery is in no

* See Worsaae.

little degree reflected in the mind of the people; there is a haughty and magnanimous nobility, a lofty bearing of freedom, which suits well the children of the mountains.

THE LAND OF WORDSWORTH is a wide and extensive land, he has memorialised his visits to many parts of our own country and Scotland, and the continent of Europe, but the land of Wordsworth especially is Westmoreland and Cumberland, and the vigour and truth of many of his descriptions can only be perceived and acknowledged by those who have become familiar with our English mountains and lakes; it is no deterioration to the glory and greatness, the universality and simplicity of the poetry, to say that many of the figures can only be apprehended by an acquaintance with mountain solitudes and scenes thus,

> "I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng."

If the reader, travelling through the depth of the rocky wilderness, away from every sound save the occasional bleating of a sheep, the tinkle of the waterfalls from the far hill tops, or the suggestive rush of the waters at his feet over the stony bed of the stream, or perhaps in a scene where even these indications of life are not, where silence the most profound rests and waits; if in such a spot the reader shouts in the full strength of his voice he may understand something of the meaning of that line, what in nature is more suggestive than ECHOES heard among the mountains, fancy becomes imperial instantly, and peoples the solitude with all strange and

extraordinary creations; so curiously the sound informs the sense, that every intonation suggests a different picture, the tramping of martial tribes, the forming of the lines of battle, the roar of artillery, the blast of the bugle, startling the silence of the old baronial halls, the clatterings of steeds, the clashing of armour; we cannot in the midst of these noises so audible over the valleys, and the mysterious heights conceive ourselves so entirely cut off from human communion, it seems as though we must be near some crowded city; the tumult of the people swells up, growing less and less audible, but more and more human as it dies away; the noise of the mart and the exchange, sailors round their vessels on the beach, the rushing waves of the sea vexed at last to wrath, and thundering around the minute gun in the storm, a second longer the vessels had reached the haven; we heard the voices of girls in the glades of quiet forests, soft feet tripped lightly by moon light through the mazy dance; the spirit stepped on from illusion to illusion, every echo awakening some new fantastic, scenic dream, this is one of the charms of the mountains, a thousand pictures are perpetually present to the mind, never painted on the retina. And not only those resulting from the more startling entrance of objects into the halls of spiritual vision, but the quiet hummings and noises of nature, the winds panting along the summits, the plunge of a stone into the abyss, "the cataracts blowing their trumpets from the steep," all these circumstances robe the soul in a mental clothing at once meditative and

visionary, while the whole aspect of the land is at once pictorial and dream-like. All the sights among the mountains are as visionary and suggestive as the sounds. Never can the writer forget the spectacle of the mid-day sun shining on the cliffs and spires of PILLAR, rugged, precipitous; the thunder splintered pinnacles, presented a thousand varied objects to the eye of fancy, every varying view suggested a new resemblance to Mosque or Minaret; the sun shining through the jagged rents of the distant rocky heights realized to the eye old Towers, time-stricken and shattered; grimly the Warden seemed to guard some slumbering beauty, feudal turrets reared themselves from the desert and the ruins, fantastic structures dazzling and most grotesque, laughed like fairy palaces over the scene, or frowned sternly like dungeons over the waste, and the echoes awakened then seemed to picture to the eye the outposts of an Alhambra; the eye was fired with the magnificent pictures of haughty repose, the ear lulled by the imagination of cool waters, scattering their spray from marble fountains in the orange gardens beyond.

It is said by some critics that Wordsworth's verse never rises to gorgeousness, but what shall be said then of the following description of sunset among the mountains.

> "A single step that freed me from the skirts
> Of the blind vapour, opened to my view,
> Glory beyond all glory ever seen,
> By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!
> The appearance instantaneously disclosed,
> Was of a mighty city—boldly say

A wilderness of building, sinking far,
And self withdrawn into a boundless depth,
Far sinking into splendour—without end!
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
Uplifted; here serene pavilions bright,
In avenues disposed; their towers begirt
With battlements that on their restless fronts
Bore stars:—illumination of all gems!
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified; on them, and on the coves
And mountain steeps and summits, whereunto
The vapours had receded, taking there
Their station uuder a cerulean sky.
Oh 'twas an unimaginable sight!
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks, and emerald turf,
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky;
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
Molton together and composing thus,
Each lost in each, that marvellous array,
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge,
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped.
Right in the midst, where interspace appeared,
Of open court, an object like a throne,
Under a shining canopy of state
Stood fixed; and fixed resemblances were seen,
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified;
Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld
In vision, forms uncouth of mightiest power,
For admiration and mysterious awe."

Fancies like these can only be realized by those whose eyes have really wandered among the glories of the

mountains. HELVELLYN seems to have been Wordsworth's mount of song that

"Lofty seat of canonized bards."

The writer has been privileged to be on that mountain in all its various moods, and to a mind that watches and receives every mood each must be an inspiration; horror does not frown there as on the summit of Scawfell; there is not the human association of Skiddaw; the sight of the quiet village or town of Keswick with perhaps the music of its church bells wafted up to the ear, and the near neighbourhood to the sea; it is not the highest of the mountains, but its scenery, its associations, its individuality, are especially entire; sunset seen from Helvellyn is indeed the reading of a glorious poem, the distant "ocean gleaming like a silver shield," the mists do not unfrequently add to the enchantment; on the one side of you the mighty line of hills in "undulation fix'd" clear, distinct, leaning against the distant sky, presently forth march the vapours, on, on they come, swiftly, terribly—you wrap your plaid around you, you are invested by them, you see no escape, they have drawn the curtain around you; mountain, valley, tarn, are all shut out from your vision, suddenly "the veil of the temple is rent in twain," and before you, although on either side still hang the encurtaining mists, there lies in the far off valley, sheeted over with sunshine, dim but most visible, seen as in a magic mirror, the little town of Penrith; even while you gaze, again the curtain falls; but beyond, beyond, the sun sets, a mighty being,

though of it you see only a large arm, a mighty bar, the awful limb of dreadful fire, red, burning, crimsoning the distant waves, heaving and blushing beneath his steady beam. Very different is the scenery of Helvellyn beneath the quiet light of the autumn moon, so have we seen it when every wind was pillowed to rest, what a rest—and the quiet light silvering over crag and mountain, and lake, and by soft shades, throwing the near into the distance, and bringing the distant near, no human habitation in sight, and scarce a trace of civilization, but dimly seen, three thousand feet beneath, the path of Patterdale fills the soul with joy because it is human; the feet of mankind trode there to-day, and will tread there tomorrow; and as descending the mountain, light after light from the scattered farms cheerfully brighten out before the eye, the heart feels relieved from the weight and desolation which had fallen upon it on the hill; it is a great day in the life of the soul when we first climb a mountain; we receive a larger accession and stock of ideas than ever before from any source whatever; the spirit is mightily ennobled by communion with nature from mountains—the widest scenes open there; the frame acquires unwonted elasticity, the long extent of country opening out before the eye, fields, glens, dingles, groups of cattle, valleys, with lakes quietly embosomed, or rivers tranquilly moving through them, all these add so much to the dignity of mental impressions, that it is scarcely wonderful that Thompson when he heard of Glover's intention to write an epic poem should have said, "Impossible,

Glover can never be idle enough to write an epic poem, he never saw a mountain in his life." On Helvellyn especially "the strength of hills," is on the mind, let the reader attempt to realize it from the description of the poet, for it is a daguerreotype, and to those who have seen it the hill lives every time the verse meets the eye.

"It was a cove, a huge recess,
  That keeps to June December's snow;
A lofty precipice in front,
  A silent tarn below.
Far in the bosom of Helvellyn,
Remote from public road or dwelling,
Pathway, or cultivated land,
From trace of human foot or hand;

There sometimes doth a leaping fish,
  Send through the tarn a lonely cheer;
The crags repeat the ravens croak,
  In symphony austere.
Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud,
And mists that spread the flying shroud;
The sunbeams, and the sounding blast,
That if it could, would hurry past,
But that enormous barrier holds it fast."

That dear land—dear to us the writer of this book too by a thousand associations; how many have been our wanderings thither—that dear old Helvellyn, we love the hoary old fellow for his own sake, and for the sake of memories of what never, never can be again to us, for the living and the dead. Ah! how young we were when we first ascended the hill, and we had young, very young hearts with us too; our spirit alternated the

impressions of magnificence and gloom. Helvellyn was our first mountain climbing experience, and it was evening—and night—stars—moon—sun—we saw them all expire and rise. Dwellers in Westmoreland think little of ascending Helvellyn, but to a jaded and wearied dweller in cities, to those accustomed to the monotony of equipages, and the bewildering glare of frivolity and fashion, what an event it is to climb the hill; that day seems cut off from ordinary days by a deep chasm; it is the heart's escape to a pure world, and a pure atmosphere; what a glorious and stirring excitement there is in the loud wild breathings of the assaulting winds. Brave hearts were with us that first ascending; one of them is stilled—such a heart; so noble, constant, and true; so loving and so strong; so eager to fight for the world, so eager to fight the world; then so vehement, so impetuous, so rash, so frolicsome; and he found a grave in another hemisphere. It was a misty day when next we ascended Helvellyn; it was a memorable day, for we had seen, and had a long talk with Wordsworth in the morning, and in the evening we went up like a Parsee to pay our devotions to the setting sun, and we had a gentle creature with us from the English Lowlands, who, until this day had never seen a mountain, and it was our delight to behold her terror, her love, her rapture and amazement, and to watch her blue eyes as she drank in all the glory of the scene around her, and to wrap the plaid around her as the penetrating mists, like rapid marching armies, swept by; and she too is gone from us, a beautiful child of

nature, with a heart overflowing with the love of all beautiful, all glorious, all quiet, or impassioned things. We have had yet another memorable ascent, that day when we went up from Ullswater and Patterdale; when, a party of us, and one most dear, the one to whose memory this volume is inscribed, fresh from the waters of grief, sat frequently on the way and read some verses of Helvellyn's our Laureate, which are you may be sure underlined; when we dined on the banks of the Red Tarn, that dear solitude, and the shadows of the Striding Edge, and opposite to it Catchidicam, and the front of old Helvellyn, hung over our repast, what an ascent was that, when every step we took the black gulf looked yet more grim and horrible, and louder and louder blew the winds through the stony trumpets. These are things which make Helvellyn dear to us, for memory is the true wedding ring wherewith we link ourselves to places, to even dead material objects, such joy has this old monarch Mountain given to us, that it is hard to believe that his stony heart knows nothing of it all; one thinks that our joys, and despairs, and tears, and fears must be known to him too.

If the space of this chapter did not quite forbid, it would be no uninteresting employment to either writer or reader to travel through the Land of Wordsworth, to commence at Bolton, musing beside the melancholy Strid,

> "Where Lady Aäliza mourned her son,
> And felt in her despair
> The pang of unavailing prayer."

We have followed already the footsteps of the White Doe of Rylstone; one of the most perfectly local and beautiful of all Wordsworth's Poems. It is possible it was suggested by a passage in Whittaker's History of Craven, alluding to the dispossession of the Nortons of their ancient home, which is the subject of the Poem. The antiquary remarks, "At this time a White Doe, say the aged people of the neighbourhood, long continued to make a weekly pilgrimage from hence over the fells to Bolton, and was constantly found in the Abbey Church Yard during divine service; after the close of which she returned home as regularly as the rest of the congregation. This incident awakens the fancy. Shall we say that the soul of one of the Nortons had taken up its abode in that animal, and was condemned to do penance for his transgressions against 'the Lord's deere' among their ashes? But for such a spirit the wild stag would have been a fitter vehicle. Was it not then some beautiful and injured female whose name and history are forgotten? Had the Milk White Doe performed her mysterious pilgrimage from Ettrick Forest to the precincts of Dryburgh or Melrose, the elegant and ingenious Editor of the Border Minstrelsy would have wrought it into a beautiful story. It is curious to observe in how many ways these picturesque animals have been employed by poetical or historical fiction. Under the Milk White Hind, Dryden personifies his own *immaculate* Church. Albert Durer, the Ariosto of his Art, has represented the conversion of an infidel Knight in a Forest by the miraculous ap-

pearance of a cross between the horns of a stag."* The Bolton Woods, and Abbey, and Hills, are among the most romantic and affecting scenes of the North of England; the ancient Abbey lies in the calm and embracing arms of the mountains; there is no trace now of the stormy feudal times, when those wild fierce Barons desolated and outraged the fair face of Nature with the cry of blood. Tradition does not even point with certainty to the

"Chantry door,
Where thro' the chink in the fractured floor
You look down and see a grisly sight,
A vault where the bodies are buried upright!
There, face by face and hand by hand,
The Claphams and Mauleverers stand;
And in his place, among son and sire,
Is John de Clapham, that fierce Esquire:
A valiant man, and a name of dread
In the ruthless wars of the White and Red;
Who dragged Earl Pembroke from Banbury Church
And smote off his head on the stones of the porch."†

Not far from Bolton is Bardney, the retreat for his long life of "the good Lord Clifford," whose Restoration Wordsworth has sung in the song of the Feast of Brougham Castle.

"To whose side the fallow deer
Came and rested without fear;
The eagle, lord of land and sea,
Stooped down to pay him fealty,

* Whittakers' History of Craven, p. 383.
† White Doe of Rylstone, Canto I.

And both the undying fish that swim
Through Bowscale-Tarn did wait on him."

The scenery of Malham Cove and Gordale Scar are not so frequented as many other portions of scenery in the neighbourhood of the lakes; and these do not so appropriately belong to the lake scenery, as lie on the threshold of it, but there is an individuality in the grandeur of this locality which sets it apart, if it does not place it beyond, its rival hills.

"At early dawn, or rather when the air
Glimmers with fading light, and shadowy Eve
Is busiest to confer and to bereave.
Then pensive votary! let thy feet repair
To Gordale chasm, terrific as the lair
Where the young lions crouch; for so by leave
Of the propitious hour thou may'st perceive
The local Deity, with oozy hair
And mineral crown beside his jagged urn
Recumbent;"

Such was the time, when we some years since now, visited this natural chamber of horrors; a vast precipitous contracted cavern yet open to the sky, although the sun-beams do not love to enter there; a dark and grim abode echoing as we entered it only to the occasional bark of the fox, the roar of the waters from the headlong height, and the croak of the raven, or the crow. But it is of a piece with the grotesque and fantastic grandeur of the whole of this neighbourhood; here is a long range of caves, and stalagmites, and stalactites, shooting forth into chambers, aisles, chapel-

ries, groined roof, and richly decorated walls, flashing back, by the mysterious and half revealing torch light, ten thousand startling shapes; the wanderer through the caves of Yordas and Clapham, will miss little, should he never visit those of Derbyshire. These, caves, hills, chasms, and frowning scars, may be called the country of the White Doe; they are not our Poet's usual haunts, his every-day highways, but they belong to his land; and the Wharf, the Aire, and the Lune, those three sweet rivers whose acquaintance the reader must make if he shall be a pedestrian in this country, will flash, and play by his side, shoot into the light, dash into the shade, now rush forth into a waterfall, now be lost apparently, in a cleft of the rock; now lost altogether to the eye, but roaring like the angry imprisoned spirit of the waters on the ear, heard above and beneath, by the wanderer, passing on his pensive and meditative way to make the pilgrimage to Malham Cove,

> "That vast theatric structure wound
> With finished sweep into a perfect ground;"

or Gordale Scar. It is not far from Bolton to Kendal, and to Windermere.

> "The Lake,
> With all its fairy crowds
> Of Islands that together lie,
> As quietly as spots of sky
> Among the evening clouds."

The river Duddon, will, as long as our Literature lasts, be associated with the name of Wordsworth by a

series of finished sonnets written on its banks; the Pass of Kirkstone (the English Trosachs); and the famous course of the Waggoner Benjamin, through Rydal, Grasmere, Whythburn, all now celebrated as amongst the most classical of English grounds; nor should "the Yew Tree, pride of Lorton Vale" be forgotten, and those

> "Fraternal four of Borrowdale,
> Joined in one solemn and capacious grove,
> Beneath whose sable roof
> Of boughs, as if for festal purpose decked
> With unrejoicing berries—ghostly shapes
> May meet at noon-tide; Fear and Trembling, Hope,
> Silence, and Foresight; Death the Skeleton,
> And Time the Shadow."

In walking over the scenery of these Poems, we are struck with the Poet's power to identify emotion with place; the mind must indeed have been incessantly active to find some fresh thought, some new and touching image, some happy object for description in every locality: like all true Poems, they copiously illustrate the domestic life of their era and locality, they are topographical and historical; in the Tale called "The Brothers," there are some fine intimations of this kind, perhaps the ancient method of chronicling events has passed in some degree away. Ennerdale, the scene of the story, is nearer to the superfluities of the Town than once it was, but how affecting is the registry of events thus indicated.

> "A shepherd dies
> By some untoward death among the rocks;

The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge.
A wood is felled, and then for our own homes!
A child is born or christened, a field ploughed,
A daughter sent to service, a web spun,
The old house clock is decked with a new face,
And hence so far from wanting facts or dates
To chronicle the time, we all have here
A pair of diaries;—one serving Sir
For the whole dale, and one for each fireside.—
——————————— for Historians.
Commend me to these valleys,
We have no need of names and epitaphs,
We talk about the dead by our firesides,
And then for our immortal part! we want
No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale,
The thought of death sits easy on the man
Who has been born and dies among the mountains."

But the Excursion is the noblest Topographical Directory to the Land of Wordsworth, the scenery peculiarly local, the human delineations most universal and various; in it, we follow in the wake of the Cumberland Funeral Procession, we linger round the profound and holy solitude of Blea (if not) Burnmoor Tarn.

"A little lowly vale,
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high
Among the mountains,
A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,
And one bare dwelling, one abode, no more."

We tread the sacred enclosure, the Church-yard among the mountains; with all its monuments, legends, and pathetic traditions of human sufferings and triumphs, it is not too much to call that great poem the Modern

Phædo. Exception has been taken to its Colloquial style even by some of its admirers, in that it is a conversation, it betrays want of dignity; let the same charge be preferred against all the writings of Plato. The Poet, it is said, should give utterance to his own thoughts without calling in the aid of Dialogue; but surely, minds entirely emancipated from the trammelling of old methods will only find, in the mode by which the great doctrines of this Poem are unfolded, one of its most prominent beauties. In its lovely Historical Episodes and Legends; in its curious paintings of mental life and progress; in its noble discourses against despondency, and upon immortality; in its fine aphorisms of lofty thought and wisdom, are presented for it a claim, to a place among the very dearest productions of genius in our language.

Another Poem in which occur some of the finest descriptions of the peculiarities of Lake scenery, is one we have never yet seen referred to, called "An Evening Walk." The delicacy and refinement of taste exhibited in every line of this truly beautiful Poem, remind the reader of Rogers's "Human Life;" but the knowledge of nature is so exact, (Wordsworth's descriptions of nature are never mere generalities) and through every line of the Poem there runs a fire of chastened enthusiasm which the venerable Author of "Italy" and "Memory" would subdue; and this Poem presents Lake scenery in its most attractive verdure; the writer has been privileged to see Windermere, Grasmere, Rydal, Derwentwater, Buttermere, Esthwaite, and Ennerdale, by all the varying shades of evening, and through all the

hours of night; and he who has not spent some hours of the evening by the margin of the lake, and some hours of the night upon the lakes, can scarcely be said to have seen them. Beautiful, truly, at all times, it is night that gives to them the fullness of the sublime; on the breast of the deep black waters, clasped round by the encircling mountains, dark, impalpable, but stern, inverted on the bosom of the waves; every sight, every sound, then are ghostly, echoes then thrill through every nerve of the frame, the sounds "leap like live thunder," from crag to crag; the ripple of the waters, the leaping of the fish, the grim illusions of contending light and darkness, all things, are thrown into an aspect strange and unreal; fancy is wide awake on the look out for images and symbols, the sceptre of stern judgment is dashed; no captive to cold calculating thought indeed could ever by any possibility find himself in such a scene; it is almost the only weird outlook we have in England, where the scenery though beautiful beyond all expression, leaves little room for daring dreaming; but surely the man calling himself a lover of nature who has not drifted his boat through the night shadows over the lake; who has not heard the wild bird scream from the heights, or startled the Heron from the watery sedges and reeds; who has not heard the plunge of stones into the deep waters from the craggy cliff sides; who has not seen the sun shake from him the encumbering purples of the early morning, and struggle up the valley to the hill; who has not seen all this, and these, and enjoyed the feelings such scenes awaken, has to

receive impressions yet of England's scenery in its most glorious and majestic moods.

As illustrations of such scenes, and indications of our Poet's most classical style of discourse, from the Poem already mentioned we select the following extracts.

"The song of mountain streams, unheard by day,
Now hardly heard, beguiles my homeward way.
Air listens, like the sleeping water, still,
To catch the spiritual music of the hill,
Broke only by the slow clock tolling deep,
Or shout that wakes the ferry-man from sleep,
The echoed hoof nearing the distant shore,
The boat's first motion—made with dashing oar;
Sound of closed gate, across the water borne,
Hurrying the timid hare through rustling corn;
The sportive outcry of the mocking owl;
And at long intervals the mill-dog's howl;
The distant forge's swinging thump profound;
Or yell, in the deep woods, of lonely hound.

* * * * *

Now, with religious awe, the farewell light
Blends with the solemn colouring of night;
'Mid groves of clouds that crest the mountains brow,
And round the west's proud lodge their shadows throw.
The lights are vanished from the watery plains:
No wreck of all the pageantry remains.
Unheeded night has overcome the vales:
On the dark earth the wearied vision fails;
The latest lingerer of the forest train,
The lone black fir, forsakes the faded plain;
Last evening sight, the cottage smoke, no more,
Lost in the thickened darkness, glimmers hoar;
And, towering from the sullen dark-brown mere,
Like a black wall, the mountain-steeps appear."

But the whole of the Poem might be quoted to the delight and instruction of the reader; fifty-nine years have passed away since it was written, its author has only been dead a few years, many of the human features of that evening landscape have changed, but the scenery continues the same,

> "Save where along the shady western marge,
> Coasts with industrious oar, the charcoal barge.
> From lonesome chapel at the mountain's feet,
> Three humble bells their rustic chime repeat;
> Sounds from the water-side the hammered boat,
> And *blasted* quarry thunders heard remote."

All these have gone, but for the Pilgrim to Windermere, the vesture of beauty still continues; the shepherd waves his hat from the vale, the dog barks among the glittering rocks, the coves and the secret hollows, and the lakes blue shades, and the towers and woods, still shew "a prospect all on fire," still and ever make it a privilege to the world-weary man to escape for a brief period, to wander through the Land of Wordsworth.

We purpose recapitulating some of those Peasant Legends which are the gems of our Poet's Volumes, for Wordsworth was the Old Mortality of Cumberland and Westmoreland. Do you see him wandering among those desolate and wild sublimities of nature, engraving a memory on a Church Yard Stone; a name upon a frowning rock or grim mountain pass; an association or relation, an incident, or friendship, upon a gate or a tree. He wandered to and fro, picking up on the highway, or in the sequestered path, those little village

incidents which give their charm to life and to the narrative or the history of life. To him, interest was never wanting; and Westmoreland and Cumberland can never fail to apply to an enquiring mind every kind of interest. He picked up every stray pebble and placed it to glitter like a gem, or a diamond in the richly simple setting of his verse, some sonnet, or yet more humble form of melody. He listened to the sounds of nature until their spiritualities became inwrought with his own verses; he set the incidents of life and of nature to music, that seems to the ear of him who attentively listens, like the music of the beating heart of nature. The incidents he has chosen to chronicle in verse are contemptible to all critics of the Jeffrey school. What more contemptible than the story of Simon Lee the old Huntsman; indeed the tale is told with sufficient simplicity: this poor old Simon, and his wife Ruth, a poor defenceless, wretched couple, go working about as well as they can; one day in his wanderings, our Poet sees this poor feeble old man vainly attempting to unearth the stump of an old tree; the poet came to his help, what age and feebleness could not perform, youth and strength speedily effected: the poor, glad, grateful old man burst into tears, to find his work so speedily done. And is this all the tale? "Oh reader," exclaims the Poet

> "Oh, reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> Oh, gentle reader, you would find
> A tale in every thing.

* * * * * *

I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning.
Alas! the gratitude of men
Hath oftener left me mourning."

At which ridiculous reflections you will plainly perceive a sneer on the lips of the Edinburgh critic. The poor Farmer whom the Poet met carrying with tears the last of his flock to sell; the judgment of Harry Gill for his cruelty to Goody Blake; these stories are very well known to the readers of Wordsworth. Village Tales, Records of the Sorrows and the Affections of the Poor, such were the subjects of his verses. The principle on which he wrought the humanity of his experience into his Poems, was the same as that on which Poets have in all ages wrought, only that he was not so much a Lyrical Balladist and a Musician in verse as a Philosophical Poet. He did not intend his measures to march or thrill to music, nor to the strains of the violin or the flute, nor to the merry village dance, or the love greeting, to the gaiety of the wedding, or the pensive delights of courtship; what incidents can be more simple than those which are eulogised, and deservedly eulogised, in the verses of Burns, or Tannahill, or Ramsay, or Bloomfield, or Clare; to be able to gather on the highway of life, or in the retired lanes of lowly poverty, simple incidents, beautiful evidences of humanity, this has been often thought to be the test of the great Poet, it is easier to perceive the distant than the near; it is especially difficult to perceive the touching and beauti-

ful incident worthy of record, happening in our neighbour's house, and yet these simple incidents have been the charm of all song; what is there in those dews that linger on the rose or the thorn in the broad Gardens or Park of the Earl, whose Oaks frowningly overhang your walls, more than in the dews that tremble on the crocus or snowdrop in your more humble plot of ground. The great commendation we have to give to Wordsworth is even that which he has pronounced on "the good Lord Clifford."

> "Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills;
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

This is what the most worthy singers have ever found, the retiring love of bashful maidenhood, the passion of ardent, oversoul'd youth—the contentment of lowly poverty, and the misery and unrest of vice; these are perpetually the burden of Story and of Song,

> "Ever charming, ever new."

Human Passion; Human Hope; Despair, and Tenderness; Fear and Faith—these as they send forth their clouds of fragrance, or their forks of fire, are the Poet's constant theme.

Wordsworth has attempted to shew the unity of Emotions, and has found them all the same, whatever may be their world or their outer vesture; but it will not be doubted that the solitude of mountain wilds, the

charm of lonely places; isolation, absence from the great crowds of human life, and the conflicting battlings of human interests, make man more interesting there, because he is more Human, less Artificial, more Individual. This is felt in all these works; they bear the same relation to the Poems of Burns that the Blue and Infinite Heavens bear to the Dew Drops of the Morning—both are lovely, both are divinely beautiful, but yet the Heavens are more than the Dew Drop, for they contain it. Both the Poets recoil at the sorrows of the forsaken maiden, or the deserted wife; both tell the tale of village disappointments, and joys, and cares; both linger lovingly by the fresh mound of the new made grave; both listen to the wail of sorrow from wrung hearts; both look pityingly on human errors, and infirmities; both linked man's destinies by some wonderful and inscrutable ties with nature's revelations and teachings; with reflections that tremble from the star, voices that thrill in the wind, and shapes that haunted the cloud and the tree; both felt the weary agony of life; the burden of the mystery was revealed to both, and by that same token both felt themselves to be related to all the family of man who could laugh or moan. But what to Burns was an April shower or an October sunbeam, was to Wordsworth an ever present and abiding consciousness. Burns felt the mystery of existence, he did not attempt to solve it, he turned it all into song; from his pen fell the shower of sunshine or of rain, from the alternating heavens of his soul; not so Wordsworth; he was like one who would press on

and look at Nature behind the curtain. There he found her, and like an oracle he spoke; he uttered the word her deeper heart gave him—not in song, but in high sage prophetic words of every varying tone. "Oh, children of men," he seemed to say, "turn aside in hither, and see, stay vanity—stay pride—stay tearful troubled ones—stay sisters of woe, and brothers who have known tears—behold, here, in this suffering, and this rejoicing, in this little human reality, here also is consolation."

We have in many places the Peasant life of the Lakes; the life of the Shepherd and the Dalesman very forcibly indicated, but in no place is it more remarkable than in the poem called MICHAEL. It is the life as we have said of a Shepherd who dwelt among the most secluded of the Valleys—Green Head Ghyll. It is a perfect Georgic of the Mountains; an Idyll of the English Alps; where a boisterous brook tumbled and rolled from crag to crag, and the mountains fronted and seemed to hem you in with their strong iron arms; an entire solitude of rocks and stones. Those who journey thither find themselves alone with a few sheep, or overhead and sailing through the sky, the wheeling kite and crow; but there, once happened incidents so human and universal as to make them themes of universal interest; that heap of unhewn stones, straggling open to the winds, contains a story—the reader has had occasion to notice that the stories of Wordsworth when they relate to his locality are as bald and entirely lacking interest as any stories may well be; their interest is derived from their being the record of Volitions and Emotions—the story is in

the inner, not in the outer life; to say again what we have said before, it appears as if the story were merely invented as an excuse on which to string natural description—local scenery, and the associations of the Poet's own thought and feeling; but with these he moves and stirs us; if the story wants that unusual event and romantic adventure in which no one knew better how to indulge than our Poet in fitting seasons, yet the nearness of the interest affects us no less than the remoteness. This story is that of an aged Dalesman, Michael, who had spent his whole life from boyhood till his eightieth year in a daily conflict with the elements—strong, healthy, gifted with keen insight and prudence, frugality and industry were impelling principles of action, and by night and day they gave heartiness and cheerfulness to that cottage; he had spent his days among mountain mists, storms that drove the traveller home, drove him out among the hills; he heard with a marvellously keen ear all the presaging intimations of the storm; every wind had a meaning to him; every blast its own various tone; to this man the rocks and streams about his highland solitude were dear, no spectacle was indifferent; he read the fields and variations of the seasons like a book, this old Shepherd; it may now be perhaps a hundred years since he walked over those hills, hanging over the edge of Grasmere Vale. Nature was the study of this old man, and a thousand incidents had been impressed on his mind, of the dumb animals he had saved from death; which he had fed or sheltered; they had all laid strong hold on his affec-

tions. He was not alone in his rambles; he had a son born to himself and his helpmate in their old age; his wife a comely and prudent dame, younger by twenty years than her husband, was a woman of a stirring life, and if he had the loneliness of the hills, she also had the loneliness of the cottage. Their cottage was ornamented with two antique wheels, a larger one for spinning wool, and a smaller for flax, and truly if one wheel was at rest, it was because the other was at work. Two sheep dogs—valuable beyond all price, with the father, mother, and son, made up the sole inhabitants of the solitary home. How little can the dwellers in cities realise the still life, the deep and hushed seclusion of that existence; other dwellings scarcely in sight, and scattered most remotely for miles over the landscape, a solemn and impressive scene at all times; even now in these days, when they are brought so much nearer to the bustle of large town life, solemn, with an everlasting sabbath silence in the brooding hush of the June Sunlight among the hills, or the deep glare of the December Snows, and the disturbing monotony of the distantly echoing waterfalls; how much more solemn then, when those poor illiterate cottagers dwelt alone with their own souls and God, in the perpetual presence of the awful majesties, and mighty imageries of nature. The hand never ceased from toil; during the day the occupations were usually out of doors, and when father and son came home their labour did not cease, excepting for their frugal meal round the clean board, their mess of porridge or skimmed milk, the basket piled with oat

cakes, and the plain hard cheese; this over, the housewife's spindle had to be carded with wool—the sickle, the flail, or the scythe to be sharpened; it was a house of industry; it was a house of care—too much care, for gaiety or cheerfulness ever to enter within. From the chimney's edge hung down a lamp, an aged lamp; it was kindled soon as the day began to grow dim; early in the evening, late in the night, it shone over the whole country; their cottage stood with large prospect north and south, and therefore high up into Easedale—up to Dunmail Raise, and down by the village near the lake, and so the light became famous in the neighbourhood, not only for itself, but as a symbol of the life of the couple, and throughout the whole limits of the Vale, that light was known as THE EVENING STAR. And then as we have said, to their old age came the boy—the son of their late years, and dearly did Michael love him, for a child to an old and declining man is the dearest of all the gifts that nature can offer; it brings hope with it, it bids the heart look forward, and prompts the mind to new actions and enterprises, and the child becomes loved not only for all it is in itself, but for all that it has caused of new and fresh in-looking into life, new ambitions, new faiths, and new fears. Michael had rocked the boy's cradle, had carried him in his arms up to the hills, and into the fields where he had wrought; he had watched him playing beneath an old solitary Oak, called from time immemorial the "Clipping Tree;" he had felt the pleasure of beholding his young urchin playing and gambolling with the sheep, catching at

their legs, even when by the look of fond correction he had reproved him for his waywardness. The gambols of childhood and its little errors are dear to the old, how dear when the child is the old man's own, and almost only object of love.

When the boy had reached his tenth year, a rude healthy lad, his father cut from the coppice a sapling, which he hooped and ironed and made into a shepherd's staff, and gave it into the hands of the boy; and so his work among the flocks began as soon as he was able to stand against the mountain blasts, and to toil up the weary heights and ways; there he would stem or turn the flock, something between a hindrance and a help to his father, who was with him, and who enjoyed a new youth in thus guiding and directing the first feeble efforts of his child, and to whom all the objects that the old shepherd loved before were dearer now, since from the boy came emanations "which were as light to the sun and music to the wind." So in the usual seemingly monotonous, but really varied employments of the flock, the hill and the field, passed the time until their son, whom they had named Luke, was eighteen years old; and now there came to them distressful tidings. Many years since the shepherd had consented to be bound in suretyship for his brother's son, a man of an industrious life and ample means, but now unforeseen misfortunes had pressed upon him, and poor old Michael was summoned to discharge the forfeiture, little less than half his substance—what was to be done. The old man revolved and thought again and again; should he sell his fields,

his patrimonial heritage; the disappointment and the loss took the hope out of the poor old shepherd's life; to sell his fields, he could not do that; so two days after he received the news he sat him down and talked with his wife. "Isabel," said he, "I have lived to be a fool to my own family; after seventy years' toiling, living as we have lived in the open sunshine of God's love, I cannot bear to think that these fields of ours should pass into a stranger's hands; I do not think that I could lie quiet in my grave to know that it were so; the sun himself has not been more diligent than I have been, and now, through that evil man, it has come to this at last, and yet there are ten thousand who would never feel a loss like this; but, Isabel, I think I have a remedy—Luke shall leave us, the land shall not go from us, and when it comes to Luke he shall have it as free as the wind that passes over it. We have, as thou knowest another kinsman, and he will be our friend in this distress; he is a prosperous man, he is thriving in trade, Luke shall go to him, and with our kinsman's help and his own thrift he will soon repair this loss, and come back to us; nothing can be done here, here every one is poor, and where every one is poor nothing is to be gained."

His wife did not reply; her mind was busy; then they sat silent together, looking back into past times; but while they sat his wife thought; she remembered how Richard Bateman, the Workhouse lad, had left the village; how a collection had been made for him at the church door—shillings, pence, and half-pennies; how the neighbours purchased a basket, and how they filled

it for the lad with Pedlar's wares, and that with it he went up to London and found a master there; and how from that small and unpromising beginning he was chosen by his master to cross the seas, where he became wondrously rich, and left his estates and money to the poor, and built a chapel floored with marble; all these things as swift as light passed through the mind of old Isabel; and at last the old man looked up and said, while he beheld his wife's face brightening, "Well Isabel, this is the best we can do, we have more left us than we have lost—we have enough left us—but this hope is a good hope. Make ready Luke's clothes, buy what he wants, and let us send him as soon as we can, to-morrow or the next day, or if we could send him, I would send him to-night." So they determined. With heavy hearts they set to work to provide the necessary equipments; day by day, for five days, the mother's heart was sad, her fingers wrought for the journey. Poor old Michael during the night lay troubled in his sleep, he lay as one without any hope; then the mother's heart waned still lower, and she begged Luke not to go, and the preparations were suspended; but then came the letter from the kinsman; he was willing to take Luke, he would do his utmost for the boy. This letter made them all proud, the rarity was read and re-read, and at last it was again determined that he should go. The poor old man, he was to part with his boy. Now it had been his purpose to build a sheepfold before he had heard his melancholy loss, and for this purpose, by the tumultuous brook of Green Head Ghyll, he had gathered up

a heap of stones; there by the streamlet's edge they all lay thrown together; thither the evening before departure did the old man walk with Luke, and there did he pour out to him all his soul, all the depth of his love to him; he told him all the blessings he poured on him as a new born infant, and how he hailed the first sweet sounds sung at his mother's breast, and how they were playmates together among the hills. He told Luke all these things until the boy sobbed again. He told him how he had longed that his boy should live on the hills his forefathers for ages had occupied, and then how his hopes were all so rudely cut down, and why it seemed best that he should go. And then he pointed to the stones for the proposed sheepfold, and after silence, he said, "That was a work for *us*, now my son it is a work for *me* alone. But lay one stone Luke with thine own hands, and be of good hope, we both may live to see a better day. I am eighty-four, but I am strong and able and hale; do thou thy part, I will without any fail do mine. I will begin again, I will go up to the heights, and in among the storms I will go as I was wont to go before I knew thy face. Heaven bless thee, my boy! thy heart has been beating these last days with many hopes, while I have been sorely tried and cast down, for when thou art gone what will be left to us. But I forget; lay the stone Luke as I requested, and in after days when thou art gone away, should evil men be thy tempters or companions, think of me, my son, and of this moment; turn hither thy thoughts, and God will strengthen thee; amid all fear and all temptation

I will pray for thee. When thou returnest thou wilt see a work that is not here, a covenant it will be between us, but whatever fate befall thee, I shall love thee to the last, and bear thy memory with me to the grave." So the boy stooped down and laid the first stone of the sheepfold. The poor old man's grief, till then repressed, broke from him, but they returned to the house, the hush of midnight fell over the hill side, all rested, or seemed to rest, and with the morrow's dawn the boy began his journey. He put on a bold face as he passed along, all the neighbours came to their doors with wishes and farewell prayers, and followed him till he was out of sight. A good report soon came of him; he wrote home loving letters, full of good news, and they were read through the village, and in all the houses through the vale. Months passed along, the shepherd went about his daily work, with confident and cheerful thoughts, and as he could from time to time spare an hour, he went up Green Head Ghyll to work at the the sheepfold. But now alas, Luke began to slacken in his duty; the city was dissolute, he gave himself to evil courses, ignominy and shame fell on him, and at last he was driven to hide himself beyond the seas. What shall the old man do now—how shall he bear this weight of trial? Love is the great strengthener. He still held on for many years, still went up among the rocks, still looked up at the sun and the clouds, and listened to the winds, and performed all the labour for his sheep, and for his small inheritance of land. And he repaired often to the hollow dell, his place of solemn warning

and parting from his son, and sought to build the fold; the eyes of his neighbours sometimes followed him, but it was believed that he often went thither and never touched a single stone. There by the half-built sheep fold he was sometimes seen sitting, his old faithful dog beside him lying at his feet; he wrought at the building of the fold seven years, and still when he died he left it unfinished. Isabel survived her husband for three years, at her death the estate was sold. The Cottage called the "Evening Star" is now gone; the ploughshare has passed over the ground on which it stood; the whole neighbourhood has changed; the oak is still left that stood beside the Cottage door; and beside the boisterous brook of Green Head Ghyll, even the unfinished sheep-fold might a few years since be seen.

This is one of our Poet's Idyllic Legends. His works indeed abound with such illustrations of the Pastoral Life of the Land, and thus present to the eye of the reader a Portfolio of Objects, in which the moral, and the material are beautifully blended and mingled.

There is nothing wanting to the Land of Wordsworth that can add to its human interest, or its romantic colouring; on the borders of the Lake country stretch out the long sheets of Sands, forming Lancaster and Morecombe Bay; nor is there a more romantic Ride than this in all England; now you seem to be rolling over velvet; now you plunge down until you wade through the deep waves or bright transparent shallows, in what certainly seems a hazardous fashion. Here you pass a poor, yet cheerful couple, plunging along,—how

will they pass through the stream through which we drove just now? here is a caravan of carts filled with shell fish; far, far out, almost to the rim of the horizon stretch the bright glittering sands of the bay, and yet the brighter rim burning beneath the sun tells us of the sea beyond. Sails whiten on the distant burnished mirror; here are fishermen's boats drawn up along the shore, and there nets drying in the exhilarating sea breeze; now and then you pass a cove, a huge recess among the hills, and now you obtain glimpses of the rugged mountain tops; such life and such loneliness; such a deep tranquil sea-born stillness; such a fresh marriage of the water breeze and the mountain winds, as altogether only Stanfield, or Turner, or Eugene Le Poittevin could paint; and yet these sands are not what they were nearly a hundred years since. The Poet Gray passed over them, and fell into conversation with an old fisherman mending his nets there, and he recounted to the Poet the dangers of the journey. Persons residing far inland, away from the neighbourhood of the sea, or the sands, and even those who have seen the solid sands, thick ribbed, have frequently no conception of the danger in crossing them at particular places, and times of the tide, few persons know the danger of "building a house upon the sand." The old fisherman told the Poet of a little Cockler's cart that set out to cross the Sands driven by an old man who had known the road all his life; and to know the road across the Sands is to read a difficult anagram—a very dark hieroglyph. He had his wife following him on horseback, and his two daugh-

ters with him in his cart; it was very fine when they started, but there soon fell a deceitful fog over the whole sea and land; what horror could equal that? On a mountain if the fog falls you can lie down, or find some cleft and wrap yourself round with your plaid and there stay until morning, if doomed to remain throughout the night; not so on the Sands; the longer you remain in uncertainty, the creeping death comes nearer and nearer, nay, a single step may plunge you into some unexpected lurking pool of water. The old man knew not which way to go; he was puzzled; the water became deeper and deeper; he stopped, and said he would go to look for some mark with which he was acquainted. So he left them—the fog deepened; they cried vainly, loudly, through the darkness, but no voice answered; the three women were alone there; fog all round them; the roar, the sullen murmur of the unseen sea—probably miles away from any safe land—wringing their hands in their despair, the young women cried, "mother, mother, where are we? you have often crossed these sands—what shall we, what can we do? mother, come to us into the cart," but she would not, she preferred staying on the horse to move to and fro, and find if possible the way; and now the waves came nearer and nearer, and the mother was soon washed from her horse into the deep, and perished. The poor girls clung to the cart, and the poor horse waded, and swam, and at last brought them back to land alive. The bodies of their parents were found too, soon after, and their father only a few paces from the spot where he had left them. Accidents like this do

not occur now, the ways are better known, the times of safety better understood; but no person wandering or riding over them, and noting all the rich varieties of light and shade—the water country, and cloud country, the humour and jocularity of the travellers who meet, and the novelties of the whole way, will, for a moment think that the Romance of the Sands is no more.*

* The Tragedy of the "Sands" will remind the reader of the Ballad of Mr. Kingsley, one of the finest in the later productions of our language.

"'Oh Mary, go and call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home.
Across the sands of Dee."
The western wind was wild, and dank wi' foam,
And all alone went she.

The creeping tide came up along the sand,
And o'er and o'er the sand,
And round and round the sand,
As far as eye could see.
The blinding mist came down and hid the land—
And never home came she.

Oh, is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—
A tress o' golden hair,
O' drowned maidens hair.
Above the nets at sea?
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
Among the stakes on Dee.

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
The cruel crawling foam,
The cruel hungry foam,
To her grave beside the sea;
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home
Across the Sands o' Dee."

The Romance of the Fells is, if possible, a wilder chapter than the Romance of the Sands. Poor Mary Hird, an old woman who set out to travel over Birker Moor, found it a wild, sad journey to Eskdale. The mists came round her, too—she lost her way, and went creeping on her hands and knees, her clothes saturated with wet. Poor old creature, she had put up in her handkerchief some oranges for her grandchildren; she was compelled to drop them on the road, and when the weather became very dark she put on her spectacles to help her closing eyes, but it was all in vain; the neighbours were soon roused to seek her, but they did not find her till the poor tired old heart had ceased from all its beatings. Indeed the Fells in winter are all terrible places; pedestrians who see them in summer time little know what dress they put on when mists, and snows, and rains fall, march and countermarch, and do battle on their summits. What reader of Wordsworth does not remember the little ballad of Lucy Gray, and her journey with the lantern through the snow to meet her mother. How the storm came on before it was expected —how the lonely child wandered up and down, vainly seeking the lost path—how her poor little feet trembled on through the snow till they reached the wooden bridge close to her father's door, leaving the little foot-marks behind as they passed along; and there all sadly disappearing in the middle of the plank, never more to make music in the household, though always to be a strain of music in the mother's and the father's hearts, since

"Some maintain that to this day
She is a living child,
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.
O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind,
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind."

It is not an unusual circumstance even now, to be lost on the Fells, or among the mountains.

To the Romance of the Fells belongs the incident which gave birth to both the poem called Helvellyn, by Scott, so well known

"I climbed the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn,"

and the finer piece called "Fidelity," by Wordsworth, and the artless, graphic, and beautiful words of Christopher North in his Recreations,* all memorialising the death of a bold, true-hearted lover of Nature, who met with his death amidst the sleets and mists of winter, while crossing the terrible Striding Edge by the Red Tarn, at the foot of Helvellyn.

But we have ourselves our own tale of adventures and misadventures to relate, were that the purpose of the book we are writing, and if we do, it is only for the purpose of showing what a margin there is left us yet in the Land of Wordsworth, for the indulgence in all descriptions and feelings, which give width to the imagination. It was a bright morning when we left Cockermouth—it could not be more than seven. The

* Recreations, vol. iii. p. 83.

heart loves to linger over scenes shared with dear hearts now in the grave. There was a sweet child of love and nature with us, a heart full of nature's every mood of grandeur and solemnity, and light and shade; and there was another, a sister of sorrow and bereavement. That day we intended to scour the land, to have a whole days walk with Poetry; and we had it, it was a bright September day, we passed the monotonous distance between Cockermouth and "the Yew Tree, Pride of Lorton Vale." We sat in the branches of the grand old monarch of woods and of ages; we wandered through lower and higher Lorton, through the Church Yard, and in and out among the Cottages. We walked on to Crummack water, and saw in her retired and graceful loneliness, that Queen of the Lakes; we found ourselves in a deep and beautiful wood on her banks, and there we spread our plaids, and formed our table cloth on the ground and dined; not a leaf rippled over our head, not a weed trembled; we seemed miles away from a human soul or habitation, now and then we caught a glimpse of the flashing waters of the Lake through the trees; birds, tame creatures, came and hopped upon our sheltered table; a brook tumbled by our side from which we filled our can, and thus we commenced and concluded our mid-day repast. How we lost our way in the arcades of that wood; how we broke out into the road again; how by lowly cottage and farm at long intervals we came at last to Buttermere's most lonely Lake; how we wound our way along through the village till we began in real earnest our day's work;

what information kindly given we got from that good dame who lives at the foot of Honister Crag; what long ways we saw winding and opening among those hills; steep, steep, steep, and now and then a platform of rock on which to rest, and then a weary and rugged way, among mountain torrents, and stones; what party we hailed when near the top, lending a momentary charm of life to us, a word or two and then a farewell; till when the hill top was fairly reached we sat down, and had tea together, and listened and felt the sadness and the desolation of the spot, and the infinite into which it opened, creep into our spirits; and pressed each others hands to remind the spirit that the mortal human heart was really there. How we began to descend, and saw such a sunset, that it seemed as if "a door were opened in heaven," and the burning throne, and "the sea of glass mingled with fire" stood all revealed. How then there gleamed upon us the silver thread, the winding waters of the Een; and to our left, bleak, bare and terrible the storm holding shrouds of Black Sail; and to our right, suddenly revealed the still Lake of Ennerdale, on which we indeed had often spent nights and days, though all new to our fellow-wanderers; how we wandered on and never met a soul, nor heard a sound beyond nature's most primeval sounds; how the huge shapeless masses of an ancient world lay thrown about us, like fractured monuments; how Pillar rose opposite to us;

"Wearing the shape
Of a vast building made of many crags,

And in the midst Its One particular rock
That rises like a column from the vale."

How weariness came over the steps of our fellow-travellers; how night deepened, and deepened; and how, when we expected to find ourselves at rest, we found we had lost our way; how the present writer hurried on, if possible to descry the nearer road; how he disturbed the poor lowly farmer at his miserable evening meal; how the horse was put to the cart, and the lanterns lighted, and the horse hurried on to reach the spot where the tired ones had been left, and to find them gone; and how at last, the misadventures all over, we met at the little Inn of Ennerdale, and laughed over the happy and glorious supper which closed the long wanderings of that happy day. Why is it all recalled now, and the story told on these pages? Perhaps because it is here not an inappropriate book mark for a sad happy memory, a flower on an early grave.

It would be easy enough to recount many an adventure among those hills, those lakes, and fells, but perhaps they had better remain where they are. Many a dear, dear walk by Bowness and Hawkshead, through Kirkstone Pass and Patterdale, through Keswick, Wasdale, over Skiddaw, through Crosthwaite, by Threlkeld Tarn and Penruddock, might reveal that we have reason to love the Land of Wordsworth.

Thus the Land of Wordsworth wants nothing that can lend to the charm of locality; it is our English Temple. If the reader is one to be arrested by more stately images, by the rustle of ancient banners, or the myste-

rious awe of monastic associations, there is Naworth Castle, and the legends of Belted Will; there are Llanercost, and Furness, or if, as is likelier, he will be more impressed by the haunts of genius, there are the banks of Greta, sacred to the memory of Southey; the low cottage where poor Hartley Coleridge spent and ended his days; the humbler homes are strewn over all the land, and all converge to the Churchyard; with what affecting beauty has the Poet caused each grave to heave with some simple tale, some legend of homely loveliness. How sweetly does he tell the story of Ellen and the JOYFUL TREE; of the old Elizabethan Knight; of the Infant's Grave; of the Conquest of Labour, and the Legend of the Pathway of Perseverance; of the Disappointed Clergyman; these are all told with the deepest pathos, they are narrations indeed everywhere found, but clad with a more distinct and clear meaning in those spots where man has time to look at man. Standing in Grasmere Churchyard we have thought, that is the centre of our Poet's Land; the rays of his genius would seem to *converge* and point there, while with the lesson of humanity lying at the feet, and the hills clasping us round as in an amphitheatre, and the shining lake waters, but all concealing the grim, and the black grandeurs lying beyond the hill, in Borrowdale or Wastwater; the calm, so near to darkness and storm, it seemed an appropriate place to chaunt the Poet's own lines.

> "And blest are they who sleep; and we that know,
> While in a spot like this we breathe and walk,

That all beneath us by the wings are covered
Of motherly humanity, outspread
And gathering all within their tender shade,
Though loth and slow to come! A battle-field,
In stillness left when slaughter is no more,
With this compared, makes a strange spectacle!
A dismal prospect yields the wild shore strewn
With wrecks, and trod by feet of young and old
Wandering about in miserable search
Of friends or kindred, whom the angry sea
Restores not to their prayers! Ah! who would think
That all the scattered subjects which compose
Earth's melancholy vision through the space
Of all her climes—these wretched, these depraved,
To virtue lost, insensible of peace,
From the delights of charity cut off,
To pity dead, the oppressor and the opprest;
Tyrants who utter the destroying word,
And slaves who will consent to be destroyed—
Were of one species with the sheltered few,
Who, with a dutiful and tender hand,
Lodged, in a dear appropriated spot,
This file of infants; some that never breathed
The vital air; others, which, though allowed
That privilege, did yet expire too soon,
Or with too brief a warning, to admit
Administration of the holy rite
That lovingly consigns the babe to the arms
Of Jesus, and his everlasting care.
These that in trembling hope are laid apart;
And the besprinkled nursling, unrequired
Till he begins to smile upon the breast
That feeds him; and the tottering little-one
Taken from air and sunshine when the rose
Of infancy first blooms upon his cheek;
The thinking, thoughtless, school-boy; the bold youth
Of soul impetuous, and the bashful maid

Smitten while all the promises of life
Are opening round her; those of middle age,
Cast down while confident in strength they stand,
Like pillars fixed more firmly, as might seem,
And more secure, by very weight of all
That, for support, rests on them; the decayed
And burthensome; and lastly, that poor few
Whose light of reason is with age extinct;
The hopeful and the hopeless, first and last,
The earliest summoned and the longest spared—
Are here deposited, with tribute paid
Various, but unto each some tribute paid;
As if amid these peaceful hills and groves
Society were touched with kind concern,
And gentle 'Nature grieved that one should die;'
Or if the change demanded no regret
Observed the liberating stroke—and blessed."

And here in the central shrine of the Poet's Longest Theme, and by the Grave Stone where lie his remains, we close our reminiscences of the Land of Wordsworth.

CHAPTER VII.

WORDSWORTH AS AN ARTIST.

"For to say nothing of his natural gifts, he has cultivated himself and his art, he has studied how to live and how to write, with a fidelity and unwearied earnestness, of which there is no other living instance; of which among British Poets especially, Wordsworth alone offers any resemblance. And this in our view is the result. To our minds in those soft, melodious imaginations of his, there is embodied the wisdom which is proper to this time; the beautiful religious wisdom, which may still with something of its old impressiveness speak to the whole soul; still in these hard unbelieving, utilitarian days reveal to us glimpses of the Unseen but not Unreal World, that so the Actual and the Ideal may again meet together, and clear Knowledge be again wedded to Religion, in the life and business of men."

THOMAS CARLYLE.—*Miscellanies; Goethe.*

"I must not be reproached with here confounding beauty with truth. I am very far from wishing that a work of art should be nothing but a true copy of the original. No it ought to be true, but it should also be beautiful, not by copying objects as they really are, but by bringing to light the idea which is in them."

WOLFGANG MENZEL.

"From beauty infinitely growing
Upon a mind with love o'erflowing
To sound the depths of every art
That seeks its wisdom thro' the heart."

THE subject with which we have headed this Chapter is indeed that of our whole book; we desire to pass in review some of those principles on which the Artist's

power is founded—those under-currents and streams of thought which give efficacy and enchantment to the painting; thus to illustrate some of those ideas in which the greatness of genius is supposed to consist. And first must we acknowledge, that as the Poet rises into the Artist, he passes beyond the impulses of ordinary humanity to a transcendental power,—the power of knowing things, and men by looking at them from a more exalted and ideal stand point. This is the greatness of the Artist; he sees things as they should be, rather than as they are, and seeing them so, he best illustrates their true character. Exact copies and imitations are never the best likenesses; the Painter makes the best likeness from his own genius, merely taking the outline and supplying the expression of the varying lights and shades which give the character to the Painting, or to the Portrait. The highest art is essentially Ideal, it exhibits the results and consequences of character, it shows the essence of a principle of conduct. So the Poet idealises Evil, as Goethe, or Good, as Schiller, or Passion, as Byron, or Nature and Abstract Humanity, as Wordsworth. And in a word, we may say that the Poet sees Nature from Law, not from Phænomena—observes the beat of the Heart more than the colour of the Skin, and enters into the organic and vital life of things, and men, and beings, rather than the mechanical and occasional combinations. The inferior Poet is merely a Physiognomist, he only observes features, the great Poet, the Artist is a Physiologist:—and as the study of Physiology is in its first pages very re-

pulsive, so also is the study of Art in relation to Humanity.—It is sad work when we begin to dissect Beauty, but if we look steadily, Beauty we shall find has its Palingenesia.

The Poet sways a sceptre over Three Worlds—Truth, Beauty, and Goodness; of these He is the Minister—the Priest—the Expositor to men; you may define these Worlds to be those of Fact, Form, and Fitness. The first concerns itself with what is, and with all that is, apart from any other consideration; the inquisitive Spirit pries into all the recesses of Being, the most attractive, the most repulsive regions of horror, doleful shades, realms of wild and wondrous Enchantment; common things, common fields and objects, truth concerns herself with them all, and the Poet is interested in whatever is True, or possibly True; the truth of all nature is interesting to the Poet, the intricacies of material nature, the intricacies of moral nature, the recesses, curious and astonishing, of Mind. Beauty concerns herself with what is agreeable in Emotion and Expression, in Object and Conception, and by a very natural movement of the mind, with what is disagreeable too; with the forms most repulsive to the senses; with the features which awaken alarm and terror within the soul; with the sounds that startle, and the sights that appal. While Goodness brings to the eye the fitnesses of things, and their infinite relations, and is found by the mind that can look deepest into the heart of Nature, and then it is found to be the innermost core of all being, the fountain and the spring of being;

the origin, the impelling principle of all the rest. Beauty lies in the Truth of things, and both in their Goodness.

But the Poet should be tried by his relation to all these Worlds; he is a great Poet in the degree in which he Perceives the Truthful, Paints the Beautiful, and Illustrates and Advances the Good. It is a great thing to do this in any World; it is a great thing to do this in the realm of dead Nature, if we dare to speak of Nature as ever dead; but the most truly great Evidence of Power and Strength, is in the Empire over the moral World, in making the Human Spirit the Platform upon which all these shapes of Reality, and Magnificence, and Beneficence, exert their power, and spread their glorious territories of Light and Shade. Hence the Dramatist is the Highest Poet, for he vindicates God within the Human Soul, and the Dramatist who attains to the Highest Power of Art is he who shews the Powers of the Human Spirit most in alliance with Virtue; most potent in subjecting evil passions and ideas to the spell and the mastery of a nature instinctive with the love of Goodness, and therefore alive to every impression of the Beautiful, and responding eagerly to every indication of Truth to Nature—Truth to Moral Nature. This is the Test of the Poet's insight, and his power to make the reader feel that he is in the presence of these, is the surest evidence that he has himself entered those hidden realms and conversed with the purest forms of being.

If this then is a fair mode of estimating a Poet, it is

very well to enquire in what way is Wordsworth related to these Three Worlds, and it will be instantly perceived how high is his Position in reference to all. He is the Expositor of Truth, especially of Moral Truth; he has a vivid Eye for the perception of all Beauty; and he has furthered the interests of Goodness, not so much by making Goodness the topic of his Enunciations, as by the life of Goodness growing out of all things on which the eye or the heart of the Poet complacently rests. Perhaps the greatest claim which he can put forward to a poetical place is to quote his own language. "The Spirituality with which he has endeavoured to invest the material Universe, and the moral relations under which he has exhibited its most ordinary appearances."*

This is the great truth of this Poetry, constituting it a new world of Emotion and Thought; for however deeply this truth has been perceived in all ages and by all poets, it has never been presented so prominently as by Wordsworth; with him the voices and images of Nature become less Analogies than Sentiments—other Poets indeed had found in all the scenery of nature responses to the varying moods of the Human Soul, but it was reserved for Wordsworth to say that

> "An impulse from a vernal wood,
> Can teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good
> Than all the sages can."

* Life, vol. ii. 416.

Can we from the writings of Wordsworth educe and shape out a theory of beauty? We think so: but that theory would never harmonize with the celebrated Essay of Alison, and perhaps the popular exponent of that theory, Lord Jeffrey, might have some dim and half-conscious perception of this, and hence find an instinctive objection to the Poems: in Alison and Jeffrey, Beauty is nothing more than an Art and Art in its meanest sense of the word. The sense of beauty is an acquisition, and taste is the result of good nerves and good eyes. It is clear that this theory entirely ignores all those mysterious and religious tingings along the blood, which once we know not whence nor wherefore. Upon the principle of this theory the man of the most reflective habit will have the deepest and most vivid perceptions of the beautiful: a statement which we know all observation would deny, we have long thought that this is one of those latent mistakes, and instances of attempting to account for causes by exteriors, and so in the end opening wide the portal for mere materialising speculation, and empirical inference. The whole of Jeffrey's theory of beauty was founded on this idea, and hence his inability to see or sympathise with a deeper world of sentiment and emotion; hence in particular his entire misunderstanding of the merits of Wordsworth.

Beauty then with our Poet is something within the soul, and within things and objects themselves; and perhaps there is a great half truth in the theory of Alison; perhaps the sense of association itself is some

half defined relationship; a sense of neighbourhood and nearness; a sense of sympathy with objects in their essences and their forms; it is the acknowledgment within man of his relationship to all nature; it is the variety of all things melted into and in unison with his nature. Alison would reduce it to a mere *Memoria Technica;* Wordsworth, on the contrary, finds it *in* the soul and *in* nature, not merely in memory and in reflection. It is the business of the Poet to be the minister and interpreter of beauty. He must love beauty, he must see beauty, he must feel himself to be a priest, set apart with sacred and consecrated fingers to the unveiling of beauty. This is what makes the name and character of Wordsworth venerable, he saw how all things from the least even to the largest were throbbing with beauty, and he held each object up to the eye; sometimes indeed the beauty was in his own mind; the moral proportions then became confused in their relations with the objects of his verse and his love. But still that was his faith and his vocation, he struck the marble heart that you might see the white of its pure crystal; he held the glass over the sharded insect that you might see the lustre of its shield, and the glorious loveliness of its radiant wings.

How different is the life of the Anchorite and of the Missionary. How different the life of the man whose business it is to publish religious truth, and his whose duty it is to contemplate it, from his cell. How different the life of St. Ambrose, or St. Anthony, or St. Ephrem among the rocks whither devotion had carried them,

to that of St. Chrysostom, or St. Bernard in their impetuous hurryings to and fro among men. Even thus different is the life of Wordsworth from the lives of most other Poets. He was the Anchorite of Poets. He sat in his Cell and revolved the truths of Nature, and of Time. His life appears to have been quite divorced from Action. He had no Enthusiasm. He appears to have tutored his spirit to a perpetual calm, and with the mind and manners of a Hermit of the middle Ages, he gathered round himself the urbanities and civilizations of the nineteenth century. Thus he studied beauty, and order, and liberty, in their relation to the Cosmos, the beauty of the Universe. He was a perfectly educated man—not that his education was that of books; in the mere bookman's lore, millions have surpassed him, in languages, in history, in systematic psychology, in natural philosophy, but our readers do not need to be told that a man may have an extensive acquaintance with all these and be very badly educated; he may be accomplished in intellectual routine, which is merely instruction, and know nothing of moral routine, which is education. Many an old Monk or Hermit pacing to and fro through his forest glades and rocky solitudes, would be thought a dunce in a respectable School; but many such a Monk so regarded as a dunce would, from his life of solitude and introspection have accumulated a mass of facts in moral history—the spiritual life of which, would enlighten an University of Sages, and it is the observative of these moral facts which forms the artist.

This was the work of Wordsworth's life; for this we are indebted to him; his power was not the result of lessons given in any "School of Design." Such a School can never make an artist; the lessons conveyed there can only impart the mechanic forms; the true power of the artist is the depth of feeling, by which he fathoms the realms below him, and scans and scales the heights which would appear to be above him; he lives in his volitions and creations, and hence he can live alone, because he can summon all beings to his loneliness; like Prospero, he can soon make his solitude "full of music," he can compel a Caliban, and create an Ariel to serve him; he soon covers his desolation with enchantments, and evolves from all, sights, and sounds of nature, and from human hearts, by attentively studying his own, the secret lore and law, and thus finds "his creed within the principles of things." *

We have already looked at the Poet of Nature in some contrast to the Poet of Art. The first, it has ever appeared to us, can see only the Soul's Freedom; the second is oppressed by a sense of Nature's Necessity; the object of the highest Art should be the reconcilement of these two. The Poet of Nature is fronted by Liberty, the Artist is fronted by Law. The most marked feature of the first is a spontaneous vitality, a boundless and everflowing and overflowing energy; the most marked feature of the last an invariable attention to the ancient injunction of the Delphic Oracle; conquer thy wonder, do not have

* Rob Roy's Grave.

too much of anything. Man needs indeed beauty, the ideal to help him through the stern realities of life. How miserable becomes life when it terminates in to-day, when it never mounts beyond the things seen, and transitory, and temporal. The Poet aids and schools the mind of his auditor to this view of life; he helps the human heart to climb the Pizgah Top, overlooking the Promised Land. Thus differing powers are presented, one Poet restricts his paintings to the present, another runs his finger over the chords of destiny, and sets the future to music: he becomes a Prophet. Burns, and Shakspeare, and Chaucer, occupy to our mind very different places to those we are compelled to assign to the Dramatists of ancient Greece, to the great modern German Poets, and to Wordsworth.

Wordsworth was an Artist, no Poet in England ever made his Works so much to result from principles, and from principles perceived, as well as received. This is the great distinction between the verse maker and the Poet; the Poet subjects all his passions, and experiences, and words to a rigid rule. The word writer or painter is content to pour them forth because they are words. It is somewhat old to place Poetry in the number of the Fine Arts, and at present we speak more frequently of the Æsthetic life, but they are the same. It is demanded of this Æsthetic temper, that it shall look upon things as they are, and not through the perverting medium of its own atmosphere. Byron was an Artist; but how much greater an Artist would he have been had he only subdued his ill-directed and mis-directed

energies; hence how much greater an Artist was Shelley. The Poet truly presents to the eye all objects as they are; he is the mirror before which they float; he is the darkened chamber through which they pass, and the pleasure we feel in reading his verses is akin to that with which we enter and gaze upon the concentrated and miniature life of the Camera Obscura. The Humourist and the Idealist must both equally work upon Æsthetic principles; the first does so in order to degrade an object, the Idealist in order to magnify and elevate. De Foe, Swift, and Goethe, and Schiller, were all Artists, but how different the result.

Wordsworth was Artistic and Idealistic; he walked, and surveyed, and wrote beneath the light of a most lofty Imagination; the most distinguishing traces of it we shall have to notice presently. His life was one act of Devotion to Art—one constant effort to catch the image of living nature. Every man who studies carefully to present an object, an impression, an impulse to his auditors, deserves their profound attention; we may by and by possibly dissent from the Artist, we may read the lesson, and the life, of the object altogether another way, but, we are compelled to give the same measure of time to the study of it that the writer gave to the narration of it; it is a duty in order to a fair estimate that we put ourselves into his place, and look at the Poem as far as possible through the same medium; very few have done this in reading Wordsworth. Even now the contempt expressed for him once by the Reviewing craft, and the "tribe of volant writers" is echoed

by thousands who have by the progress of Society reached to their place, and who fancy themselves sufficiently gifted to pronounce immediately *their* opinions on subjects demanding a gleam, at any rate of light they have never thought it worth the trouble to obtain. This may be laid down as certain, that to read Wordsworth, a higher education, and a deeper experience is demanded than for the comprehension of most Poets. His writings may be called the Iliad or Ænead of the soul.

Lofty imaginative utterance, this is a characteristic the reader will speedily notice in these writings; in no poet will he find occasion to notice it more; concentrated expressions, abound here, and we demand these in the poet—expressions, short, sententious, but in which thought and feeling, are fused down, or say rather folded up, like electricity in a dew drop, and these expressions in a poet evidence the presence and depth of his feeling, and the vividness of his eye to catch and to compel to his service those occult resemblances only to be seen by the great poet. Many writers have accused Mr. Wordsworth of a practical inconsistency here; the grandeur of his language occasionally, say they, does not harmonise with the simplicity of his theory, but we shall find that his theory was that Poetry is the utterance of Nature when in a state of excitement or feeling, the charge of inconsistency would only be just if he put language of strong ideal beauty and sublimity into the mouths of simple and uneducated Peasants. No great poet has spread over his works a richer profusion of these

aphoristic gems, which hang on the memory like stars, pleasantly lighting up the way to thought, to feeling, coming in most unobtrusively to illustrate the subjects of conversation, charming the mind in lonely rambles by their appositeness, and rousing the spirit as if with Hebraistic fervour, soaring so far over ordinary tones, and topics, and impressions, as to give not only to the Poet, but the habitual reader, a habit of protracted moral sublimity.

To Imagination especially belongs that power which speaks like light, or like lightning, revealing by a single glance, or beam, by one stroke of the artist's pencil more than the ordinary mind could convey by a volume of words. The imagination takes the meanest object and ennobles it, hanging round the simplest presences of Nature, impressions and associations allying them with circumstances of the highest moral interest. Especially was this the case with the homage our Poet paid to Flowers; the Daisy was elevated by him as the reader knows, in some well known verses, to a place in a rank of notabilities; in his eye it was "a Nun, demure, of lowly port"—"a little Cyclops with one eye"—"a silver Shield spread over a fairy;" so the small Delandine or common pilewort becomes to him—"a Star" of as much importance as a newly-discovered planet to an astronomer. It is in the same spirit that he characterises a Storm in that bold imagery fresh to every reader's recollection, during the time

"While mid-day lightnings prowl
Insidiously, untimely thunders growl;

While trees, dim seen, in phrensied numbers tear,
The lingering remnant of their yellow hair,
And shivering wolves, surprised with darkness, howl,
As if the sun were not."

The genius of Autumn is finely sketched in these lines in which the yellow falling leaves are made to seem to the Poet's eye like madness tearing with melancholy hand its phrensied locks; and in such a mood too in the earlier portion of the year, when the haughty majesties of Nature bowed before the tempest, and the slighter and more modest forms of Nature escaped, they seemed to him like lowly weakness surviving crouching, and guilty grandeur.

"*These frail snow-drops that together cling,*
And nod their helmets, smitten by the wing
Of many a furious whirl blast sweeping by.
Observe the faithful flowers! if small to great
May lead the thoughts thus struggling, used to stand
The Emathian phalanx nobly obstinate,
And so the bright immortal Theban band,
Whom onset fiercely urged at Jove's command,
Might overwhelm but could not separate!"

In the same way the overthrow of Napoleon in Russia is characterised by terrible and vivid truthfulness, by a bold Homeric grandeur of Imagery—Imagery which impersonates to the eye

"For He it was dread Winter! who beset,
Flinging round van and rear his ghastly net,
He smote the blossoms of their warrior youth,
He called *on Frost's inexorable Tooth,*
Life to consume in Manhood's firmest hold,

He bade the snow their ample backs bestride,
And to the battle ride:
No pitying voice commands a halt,
No courage can repel the dire assault;
Distracted, spiritless, benumbed and blind,
Whole legions sink, and in one instant find
Burial and death: look for them, and descry,
When morn returns—beneath the clear blue sky,
A soundless waste—a trackless vacancy.
* * * * * * * *
That old decrepit Winter, He hath slain
That Host! which rendered all our bounties vain."

Could words with more truthfulness—could colours more graphically and powerfully paint the silent march of the Snow Storm, its terrible power, its icy fang, the completeness of the conquest, and the mantle of white oblivion, falling over the whole track of the shattered camp, the flying invaders. This is Wordsworth's great claim to our intellectual homage, the protracted flight of sublime Imagery, in which flight however we always see the object, now like a speckled wing hovering almost as if motionless on the fringe of the distant cloud, and now like a gleaming white sail, out on the very verge of the distant tossing billows: and this is a great element in the Artist life, it is the power to see the highest and finest analogies in objects, to bring moral resemblances forth from their lurking cells, in the halls and palaces of quiet flowers; from the flutes and trumpets of the winds; from the humanities of dead and animal Nature, so finding again as the Ancients found, auguries in birds, and voices in silences.

The following too is a very bold and happy instance

of Impersonation. The genius of Anarchy, terrible and beautiful starts before the eye.

"Who rises on the banks of Seine,
And binds her temples with the civic wreath?
What joy to read the promise of her mien!
How sweet to rest, her wide-spread wings beneath!
But they are ever playing,
And twinkling in the light,
And, if a breeze be straying,
That breeze she will invite;
And *stands on tiptoe, conscious she is fair*,
And calls a look of love into her face,
And spreads her arms, as if the general air
Alone could satisfy her wide embrace.
—— Melt, Principalities, before her melt!
Her love ye hailed—her wrath have felt!
But she through many a change of form hath gone,
And stands amidst you now *an armed creature;*
Whose panoply is not a thing put on,
But the live scales of a portentous nature;
That, having forced its way from birth to birth,
Stalks round—abhorred by Heaven, a terror to the Earth!"

And equally in the following lines by a rapid and Hebraistic fancy does the writer kindle into the description of the Lord of Hosts.

"Nor will the God of peace and love
Such martial service disapprove.
He guides the Pestilence—the cloud
Of locusts travels on his breath;
The region that in hope was ploughed
His drought consumes, his mildew taints with death;
He springs the hushed Volcano's mine,
He puts the Earthquake on her still design,
Darkens the sun, hath bade the forest sink,
And, drinking towns and cities, still can drink

Cities and towns—'tis Thou—the work is Thine!—
The fierce Tornado sleeps within thy courts—
He hears the word—he flies—
And navies perish in their ports;
For Thou art angry with thine enemies!
For these, and mourning for our errors,
And sins, that point their terrors,
We bow our heads before Thee, and we laud
And magnify Thy name, Almighty God!
But Man is Thy most awful instrument,
In working out a pure intent;
Thou cloth'st the wicked in their dazzling mail,
And for Thy righteous purpose they prevail;"

The illustrations are now before the reader, and he will perceive, if he has not before perceived, the character of those Imaginative impulses, and aspirations, and paintings, we surely need not be desirous that he should admire; there never was a more wayward Fancy united to a more chastened and sublimed spirit than that which we behold in these pages. The Poet has told us how the fancy existed once alone, unchastised, when to his eye every Yew Tree had its Ghost, and when every Elder Tree had its own dismal and legendary appearance; when the splash or spray of water on the distant rock gleaming beneath the sun seemed to the eye like a bright silver shield suspended over the tomb of a Knight; when the blue flame from the charcoal fire ascending at evening through the trees of the distant wood, seemed to the eye like a hovering or ascending spirit, rising from the cottage where it had just left the body for the grave. Fancy wild—free fancy in the mind of a boy from which was to spring such a man as he

whose genius we poorly attempt to record; fancy would indeed touch all objects; before the enchantment and the charm were removed from Nature by the cold hand of judgment. All the legendary stores of tale and poem, of history, and of thought, poured themselves around him; shadowy caves revealed in the twilight the gigantic and stern warrior clad in mail; the hooded monk turned on the young pilgrim ghostly eyes from the niche of the rock, and the veiled nun, followed by the pilgrim leaning on his staff. Blessed Time! and not vain, for from such Time with all its intimations and revelations is the after character reared; then spiritual presences haunted the bells of the flowers, and their voices spoke in the gentle pattering of every drop of rain; then nothing in the world was less than wonderful, and the smallest object had power to awaken the keenest and most intense admiration. That was the day when the Cuckoo was

> "No bird, but an invisible thing,
> A voice, a mystery;"

when the whooping of the ploughboy proclaimed his joy in the mountains—when the spirits were so buoyant and crowded with so many objects of blessed and beautiful thought, that the heart ached with its own happiness, and longed to escape to the deeper shade,

> "Brushed by the Owlet's wing
> When twilight was preferred to dawn
> And Autumn to the Spring." *

* Ode to Lycoris.

Through these swift flashing fancies, these shadows sought from the presence of too much light, these fantastic worlds piled up like pillars of cloud, to be dissolved into air, and only to leave their influence on the heart in the freshness distilled from them in rains or dews; through these, the poet has ever to make his way to the loftier height, and the more glorious platform, and he only can be a noble poet who passes right *through* all these wonderings and admirings—these fancies, and these dreams.

We have always thought that among the highest evidences of our poet's æsthetic or artistic powers must be numbered his shorter tales and ballads. These in their subtlety, in the breadth and height of their imaginative fervour, in their execution and intention, are more like the ballads and poems of Schiller, than any other poems with which we are acquainted; they occupy their own distinct territory, and we do not for a moment intend to imply that the one was at all suggested by the other, but in both the artist sought to teach through the arrangements and ministrations of Nature, that all things work beneath central and ever-pervading Law: that the forces of Nature are not blind forces; not even so much what may be denominated Agencies, as Influencies; they all point to the same end, the investing human action, and even material nature with spiritual properties and powers; they form an order of Poems standing in English Literature, by themselves alone; no pieces more demand to be read by a mind chastened and prepared; they abound in human in-

terest, but they all remind us of the Seeress of Prevorst of whom it was said she had the faculty of seeing not merely the body of the person she looked at, but that she saw also the spirit of the person, standing, or walking, or sitting. So through these tales, as the story runs along, and charms us by the narrative, without obtruding on us the moral or the intention, it seems to be thrown at every verse like a shadow from the order of the Poem.

We will point the reader's attention to two or three of these truly great productions. The foundations of them are found in the mines of Classical reading and mythology, in the Old English Chronicles, and in the teeming inventions and fancies of the poet himself; one of the finest of these productions is the grief of Laodamia. Protesilaus was one of the great heroes slain in the siege of Troy. His wife, smitten with grief for her loss, besought the Gods that he might be restored to her; she presented herself before them at the rising sun with vows and sacrifices, and even while her impatient spirit continued praying, in the distance she beheld him approaching to her,—

> "O terror! what hath she perceived? O joy!
> What doth she look upon? Whom doth she behold?
> Her Hero slain upon the beach of Troy?
> His vital presence? his corporeal mould?
> It is, if sense deceive her not—'tis He!
> And a god leads him, winged Mercury!"

And Mercury spake to her, touching her with his wand, "calming all fear," "Thy prayer is answered, Laodamia,

thy husband comes to tarry with thee for three hours." The Queen sprang forward to greet her husband, but the unsubstantial form eluded her embrace; she implored Protesilaus to confirm the vision with his voice—to speak—to tell her that the vision was not a mockery—to assure her that it was himself; she pointed to his Palace, to his Throne, "Speak," said the impassioned woman, "and the very floor thou treadest will rejoice." And her husband replied to her, recounting his history since he had left with the warriors. "I *am* a spectre, but I am not sent to scare thee or to deceive. I come, by the Gods permitted, to reward thy fidelity; thou knowest," continued the spectre warrior, "that it was foretold by the Delphin Oracle that the first Greek who touched the Trojan shore should die, but that threat could not hold me back; the cause demanded a victim, I leapt first upon the sand and I was slain by Hector."

The admiration of Laodamia was kindled. "Supreme of heroes," she addressed her husband, "I bewail no more; I forgive thee—thou art here—thou art restored to me—thou art kind as resolute, and fair as kind, thou art no spectre, no vain shadow, come, sit thee down by my side, thou art blooming as of old." But even then the Gods threw over the features of Protesilaus the livid hues of death, and he continued, "Thou seest that my doom is past—mourn not the change, *ours* is a region of calm pleasures and majestic pains; I am here to teach thee 'to control, oh, my beloved consort, rebellious passion'

'For the gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult of the soul;
A fervent, not ungovernable, love.'

The time approaches, I must soon leave thee." But his wife interrupted him anew with her passionate grief: "Ah! wherefore? Did not Hercules wrest Alcestes from the tomb? Did not the spells of Medea disperse the weight of years from Æson? But if thou must go I will follow thee." Kindly he smiled upon her and said "Peace;" he spake to her cheerfully—the ghastliness had fled from his lips and his cheeks—the beauty of heaven, calm and mournful sat upon his mien, and then

"He spake of love, such love as spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away, no strife to heal,
The past unsighed for, and the future sure
Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there
In happier beauty, more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether a diviner air
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey."

"Yes there," continued he, "the soul shall enter, that hath earned that privilege by virtue. Ah! there I learned the end of man's existence; I have seen the mistake of our games and our revelries, and I have learned the purity and beauty of thy love." And then he recounted to her all the conflicts he had to endure before he could defy and front the certain and inevitable death upon the Trojan shores; how he thought of his

parting from his beloved wife never again to be beheld, with all the joys of their wedded life and the cities they had planned together; the fountains and the gardens, and the unfinished towers; but still heroism spoke, duty impelled, should the Foe cry "Behold they tremble;" the thought was embodied in the deed, he leaped upon the shore, to die. And now he came from that dark land of Shades to counsel and console his wife, so permitted by the gods, he invokes her to a lofty sympathy in verse, of most dignified and chastened beauty of utterance and sentiment.

> "'*And thou, though strong in love, art all too weak*
> *In reason, in self-government too slow;*
> I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
> Our blest rëunion in the shades below.
> The invisible world with thee hath sympathised,
> Be thy affections raised and solemnized.
> *Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend—*
> *Seeking a higher object. Love was given,*
> Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
> For this the passion to excess was driven—
> *That self might be annulled:* her bondage prove
> The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.'"

Aloud Laodamia shrieked,—for Mercury reappeared, the time allotted for the interview had passed; she would have clasped the shadow, but in vain, it would not, it could not be detained; the Spectre passed thro' the portals, she sunk on the floors of the palace, a corpse. Thus was Laodamia in vain exhorted, in vain reproved. The gods know not the weakness of pity, and therefore had she to spend some time far from the land of the

happy ghosts, till she too should be purified from the heat of those Passions which had intercepted the flow of her calmer happiness on earth. While men shed tears for her, they also planted a knot of trees to mark out the place of her husband's heroism and death.

Wordsworth was eminently fitted to teach the lesson against sacrilegious sorrow which this poem finely enunciates. He had as we have seen drank of those cold purifying waters which seem to forbid the approach of sorrow in too tumultuous an acquaintance with the human heart. The sorrow which smites in paroxysms is not the sorrow which makes better, it does not make wiser, it does not descend deep enough to make really a sadder man. We have to bid some prating sorrows in the outer courts of the heart to hold their peace, before we can hear the voices of the deepest sorrows, the ambassadors of God, speaking to the soul. Is it not hence that many of the world's highest and mightiest Teachers, seem beyond the reach of tears; their face appears like marble to us; their eyes like unfathomable wells to which the waters never come. But there are pools generally in such hearts, whose waters angels are sent immediately from heaven to trouble, and to heal.

Thus this poem of Laodamia conducts us at once to the main object both of the Epic and the Dramatic Poem; here is the soul of all Tragedy—this is Tragedy; —what do we behold in the most august of Shakspeare's tragic sculptures, but, that his noblest characters like Laodamia, in the vehemence of their passion, furnish us with the cause of their own destruction? This is

always the soul of the portrait, we behold the great, the good, the noble, suffering and overwhelmed, by the misapplication of their own magnificent gifts. And this is the true source of the difference between the ancient Grecian Drama, and Shakspeare—in the ancient Drama we behold doom and destiny advancing as Fates, and winding round the victims their terrible coil, as in a moral and spiritual Laocoon; but in Shakspeare we behold the reverse of this, destiny springs from within the urn of the victims' hearts. They are their own good or evil genii; this is the Christian idea of Destiny, which thus becomes reconciled with the freedom of man. We should not know where to look for a finer illustration of the tragic element of life than in Laodamia, this woman with a boundless gift of love, an inexhaustible fund and flow of passion, instead of listening to the divine teachings, and thus translating the passions into ministering spirits, making them to bear the superior guidance of Will, submits as we behold, the Will to the Passions, and thus is crushed by what she should conquer. This is Tragedy—all Tragedy in a word, may be defined to be, man mastered by circumstances.

In Wordsworth there is not merely the circumstance, but the philosophic and æsthetic Evolution. He rescued the materials from the hands of the Pagan Mythology, and made them to become tributary to Christian Truth. The tragic Circumstance must always be founded on the tragic Emotion. The idea is not, that it falls like a bolt upon the helpless, but that it springs like a snake

within. Will the reader forgive us if we enter upon the discussion of principles, which perhaps may demand pages for their unfolding, or in a word shall it be said once for all, that

"To be weak is miserable—doing or suffering."

Weakness is the last and crowning affliction of man. He who has not strength to wrestle, to grapple with his Destiny, must be overcome by it. Within our hearts lie our greatest enemies—our depravity is our death—our passions and our earthliness, alone, can bind Prometheus to the rock. We have before remarked how in the pagan world Destiny crept like a stealthy and inexorable power over and around man—he did not dare to revolt, he quietly awaited his doom—his spirit settled down with a melancholy stolidity—he could not help himself—he was not free. And there are many modern writers who teach this as a desirable state to reach out the life to—"now confess thy weakness, and submit to it"—this is what Goethe teaches in Germany, and does not Carlyle in England? Why strive to kick against the goads? It is very mournful, it is a short cut back again to Paganism, without the apology for a residence there.

Do you remember that most stirring and suggestive Lyric of Schiller's, the fight with the Dragon; never was a finer picture painted than that of man striving with and overcoming Evil. Laodamia too is a fight with a Dragon, but here Evil, the Dragon, rears its crest proudly on the stage a conqueror. It is the Tra-

gedy of Avenging Passions, and Laodamia may be taken as a text from which both writer and reader may enter into a dissertation upon the nature of all tragic feelings and circumstances. There is in it a sustained and quiet majesty, such as Wordsworth especially throughout his writings could maintain, and did usually maintain, but which is peculiarly fitting here. It would be difficult to find any poem so like the forms which salute us from the ancient marbles; it strikes through the spirit with a cold beauty, for the passion of Laodamia only causes the form of Protesilaus to chill us yet more —it is like the shadows from some of the most lovely forms in nature, but falling on the cold streams of time, the piece instructs us greatly, but it chills the spirit, and yet leaves upon it the impression of the benignity and beauty of Divinity; the mind brightens while reading it, although the spirit faints.

Mr. De Quincey in his estimate of Lessing's immortal Essay on the Laocoon, has not hesitated to shew the analogy between the principles of criticism adopted by the illustrious German, and those on which Wordsworth has also based the productions of his genius; indeed there is a great resemblance between the doctrines of the two great teachers, and their influence on the minds of their respective ages and nations. The Laocoon of Lessing is a piece of criticism such as in our literature it would be most difficult to match, and it elucidates to their deepest foundation the great laws of art in their human relations; at the same time it overflows with veneration for the mind of Greece; for

the calm and statuesque majesty of the Grecian genius —for its power, and its repose. We have before referred to the Grecian tendencies of Wordsworth's mind, by which we do not mean so much his ardour in the pursuit of its literature, but his sympathy with the principles of its development. Of Lessing and the Laocoon we presume he knew nothing, save so much as might have been communicated to him in conversation with De Quincey or Coleridge, but he had anticipated all they could say, and his Essay on Epitaphs brings to the hushed repose of the Country Churchyard the same principles as those, which in the mighty marbles of Grecian Statuary, shook the souls of the ancients. The reader of the Excursion also will remember how beautifully the Pantheism of Greece is referred to, and how the apparitions of rural solitude in that fair clime, and the echoing sounds of tuneful notes, and winds blowing strong and shrill, and sunbeams glancing with their shadows over distant hill-tops, became transformed into the tube of Apollo, or the Goddess Diana with her Nymphs sweeping by in the storm of chase, or Oreads and Zephyrs, while the withered boughs of the grotesque trees became the lurking Satyrs, "the wild brood of gamesome Deities," In all that ready sympathy with nature which characterises the Grecian mind, Wordsworth was eminently Grecian.

There is a very obvious distinction of genius into the *Artistic*, or the *Æsthetic*, and the *Earnest* or the *Passionate*. The Æsthetic temper on the whole denies feeling, although it is at once the result of it and the cause of it;

hence Sculpture is eminently Æsthetic—more so than Painting, and hence of Poems, and Dramas especially, some, remind you most of Painting, and some of Sculpture, but more of Sculpture than of Painting. Wordsworth especially was a Sculptor; his Poems are warm with the life of the Artist; they are not passionate in their colouring—they are never roseate or high toned in their Scenery. The Artist conceives great Positions and Situations, and finding himself in the attitude and characteristic of the impassioned,—living in that situation, he can do no other than paint it, or chisel it. It is great when the Artist becomes sublimed by the passion which first impelled and gave impulse to his wing, and yet has the power to see things in their clearer vision, from the pure marble air to which they have borne him. It is great to drink the draughts of the black wine of earthly passion, but it is disgraceful to exhibit the intoxication, and therefore the feebleness of the soul.

Although Wordsworth was not a Dramatist, we have been desirous to offer some observations on Dramatic Composition, and Dramatic Genius in general, for he did survey life from its Dramatic Aspects,—*Dramatic*, that is human life surveyed from its most interesting, affecting, and passionate attitudes. The subjective of human life made objective—the life of the soul embodied to the eye—the dark made visible—this is the most ambitious effort to which human genius can direct its energies, for it includes all and every kind of composition —it vitalises history—it dashes in pieces the processes—

the links, and chains of logic, of dialects, of metaphysics, and philosophy, and gives the results of all in sparks of fire; in auroral light; in sheet or phrensied lightning. It uses every faculty of the human mind, and is at once logician, humourist, poet, and divine.

You must be quite familiar with that fine image of Goethe, in which he likens Hamlet to one of those curiously finished clocks, in which while you see the dialplate, you also see the movements of the wheels and works within, yes, that is the Drama; you see at once the outer life and the hidden life—life in its causes and life in its results. The scenes and the acts go by as they do in all life, involving a double action—the seen—the unseen—as I said before, the subjective is made objective—it is painting, it is sculpture, but it is both *alive*; when the Drama is real, we can only apply to it the well known image of our greatest teacher in the Winter's Tale, like Hermione, the cold marble glows into life—man creates, and the figure descends and speaks.

Dramatic writing is divided into two classes, we have

I. The Classical Drama—the mighty Dramas of Greece, of Eschylus, of Euripides, or Sophocles.

II. The Romantic, represented best by the writings of Shakspeare.

But you will say what in a word is the difference between the Classical and Romantic Drama; what was the difference between the mind of the world before Christianity and since its introduction; what is the difference between the Parthenon and Westminster Abbey—between the Coliseum and York Minster—between

the Helenic and the Gothic mind; what is the difference between Prometheus bound on his Scythian Rock, and Hamlet bound, within the circle of the infinite? Have you ever thought of these things? What momentous questions a thought on the Drama suggests, with reference to the march of our race.

Read Laodamia and the first book of the Excursion, and enquire, what is Tragedy? I have already said that the Classic and Romantic Dramas lie at the opposite interpretations of life; this, in a word is the difference between these two minds, the Grecian and the Gothic; in the former, Nature sits on Man, a dead colossal majesty; in the latter, Man reposes on Nature, and turns her majesties into a medium for his own exaltation; hence, notice the vastness of the ancient works; Greece reduced vastness it is true, to beauty and order, but in all her works we trace the same spirit which loomed in stone from the Assyrian and Ninevitish Bulls and the Coptic Sphinx, and in harmony with this idea Destiny is everywhere in the Grecian Drama, and Destiny makes her Tragedy. Man cannot rise beyond Nature. Man *cannot* rise above Nature, unless lifted by the force of some moral mechanics which do not now reside solely within his own soul. Man cannot rise above Nature—read these two books side by side, and they will affirm that truth to you; the great Book of the Drama, or the great Book of Architecture—read if you would know human history, the stones of a nation, see how they develop the mind life of a people. You have been if not to Nineveh, to the Crystal Palace, and have seen

the images in wood of those awful Bulls; when the people carved such Gods and Kings from the solid Rock could they, think you be free? When Stonehenge, and Abury, and Stanton Drew were the Temples of a people, do you think they represented a state of moral freedom? Could the builders of the Pyramids have been free? The achievements of the people always represent moral states; and Architecture especially represents the mind life; could the builders of the Grecian Temples have been free? those cold aspects of awful beauty chill one into the knowledge, that they must have been reared by a people schooled into a calm. Ah! what a difference, in Westminster Abbey, in Wells, in Lincoln, in York, they represented perhaps some bondage to the Priesthood; but what a grace, what energy, what elasticity we have in the aisle and transept,—the foliated stone,—the corbel and crocket, the grotesque, the uncouth, the wild, the calm, the magnificent and the mean mingle, and heave and glow there as in the world. Why all those Gothic and Saxon arches, as they heave back and reflect the volumes of sound, shout "we are of the new world, the new mind, we are Gothic, we are Free."

We have often remarked how wonderful from our human stand point it is that the Christian Faith which proclaims man's moral freedom, should have found its way into the world simultaneously with the development of the Gothic Race, the only race able to comprehend and to convey that faith round the world. A new Faith, a new Race, therefore a new Civilization, therefore a new Mind life, therefore a new Drama. If you would

write as the Grecian wrote you must feel and believe as the Grecian felt and believed. The Drama is the mental and moral architecture of a people—it is the history of men. How differently the Grecian regarded this visible world to the Tuetone, how different the Theseus of that Mythology, or its Prometheus to the Odin and the Thor of ours, yet the free spirit of the German beheld nature under aspects gloriously beautiful and lovely, and they did not generate the Snakes for a Laocoon, nor the petrifying tears for a Niobe. Nature to the ancient Greek was an inflexible Chronos, or Sphinx, or Saturn, at the best a Pan. Nature to the German was an Ygdrasill Tree full thro' all its branches of life, and power, and beauty, and freedom.

Wonderful has been the influence of Greece; she fascinates us still, her influence is all but imperial still, over the human mind. The mention of a Grecian City indeed calls up but few images of beauty to the mind, for the interior had but little to attract. Even Athens itself, heterodox as it seems to say so, was not nearly so beautiful within perhaps as Liverpool. Athens, and the Grecian Cities in general, we conceive to have been a sort of combination of Bristol and Chester. Of Athens we know that the stairs were erected in the streets, as in Chester, and the upper apartments projected over them, disfiguring the façades, obstructing the view, and preventing the free circulation of the air; there were galleries over the spectators' heads, the streets irregularly built; most of the houses wretched; the town badly supplied with water; no houses allowed to boast of any

superiority; those even of Themistocles and Aristides must not rise beyond their neighbours', however great their possessors; the house larger than its neighbour, in attracting notice, would instantly have been doomed, and the house of the citizen convicted of treason against the state, was instantly demolished, "as a vessel is broken containing poisonous liquors." But the buildings were magnificent, and even within the city you would find the Portico, the Temple, the Theatre, and the Grove; nor were the streets wanting in statues, and the people who were prevented from lavishing wealth on their own houses, were not prevented from adorning their Temples. But it was on the outside of the city that the glory, the bravery, and the splendour of this great metropolis of ages broke on the view. I am afraid that the streams of the Cephisus and the Illyssus were not much purer than our Mersey, but stretch the quay out for nine miles, and line the way with 3000 statues, and cover a range of heights, with groves of laurels and of roses, and let them stretch into Wales, and let myriads of gleaming marbles rise through the trees, and throng the streets with peoples of all the races, and all the kingdoms of the great eastern world, and you may dream of Athens.

We must confess that it is natural, that the inspiration of the poet should often come from those fascinating Mediterranean shores; from that extraordinary beauty of landscape; that irregularity of surface; those continual thickets of laurel roses; those laughing waves for ever beautiful and blue, studded with islands, and every

isle consecrated by nature, and crowned by art; those distant mountains, the hoary Pentilichus and Hymettus, for ever echoed with the music of falling streams, while the valleys at their feet were the retreat of the vine dressers, who raised amidst the gladness and jocundness of nature the *tryg*edy or the song of the Vine, or the still more stately *tra*gedy, or the song of the Goat. Bacchus and Pan were everywhere worshipped Nature and Pleasure; their Sacred Groves, their Parian and Pentilican Marbles; their echoing Songs; Tempe in its Savageness; Hymettus in its Beauty; the Seas that laved their gorgeous and magnificent Quays—the like of which this world has never seen, and I think shall never see—Temples that gleamed from the bowers of Laurel; Statues of Dryads and Fauns of the fair and fabled Nympholepsy of a day even then ancient; from the skies, from the summer flowers, from the laughing tides, from the crag to the valley, from all Art, to all Nature, there went forth a wail, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." That sentiment was in all their feasts—philosophies—dramas—household cares, and arts. The Greek was a melancholy man; ah, we can understand it now, neither nature, health, nor immortality, enjoyed in a beautiful garden, even as the Greek enjoyed, could confer happiness. All is gone of that world.

"Hark how the light winds flow and ebb
  Along the open halls forlorn?
See how the spider's dusty web
  Floats at the casement tenantless and torn.

The old old sea, as one in tears,
  Comes murmuring with its foamy lips,
And knocking at the vacant piers,
  Calls for its long lost multitude of ships." *

It will not be difficult for the reader to discriminate the difference between the ancient and modern mind if he pictures to himself *the Ideal of Ancient and Modern Heroism*; the Ideal of the Ancient World was *the Action of Passion—Endurance—Suffering*; the Ideal of the Modern World *is the Passion of Action—Resistance and Magnanimity.* Thus the Ancient Poet did not contemplate Man as *Free*, but as *Bound.* Prometheus, whom you must all know, is a very true picture of the whole mind of the ancient world; that Titan, that strong and daring man, who stole from heaven its fire, and who was beheld in the great tragedy bound to the Scythian Rock, in the vast untrodden desert, bleached beneath the horrid cold, and scorched by the blazing sun, to whom the night with her spangled veil of stars brought no peace, no sleep, nor the sun scattering the hoar frost of the morning brought delight; we shiver while we read the description of that stricken and blasted god, who saw all futurity, and knew that the doom of necessity could never be resisted. That desert rock was the world to the primitive Greek; that Prometheus who invoked the hurling lightning he could not avert, and apostrophised, but not to implore their pity, the white feathered snow from above, and the thunder

* T. B. Read, one of the least known but most remarkable poets in America.

embroiling the universe from beneath, was to the Greek, himself, and his whole race, the necessities, the fates were around Him, physical, material; he could say as the dreadful Prometheus said,

> "Ay in act now; in word now no more
> Earth is rocking in space,
> And the thunders crash up with a roar upon roar
> And red eddies of lightning flash fires in my face—
> And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and round,
> And the blasts of the wind, universal, leap free
> And blow each upon each with a passion of sound,—
> And ether goes mingling in storm with the sea!
> Such a curse on my head, in a manifest dread
> From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along!
> Oh my mother's fair Glory! O Ether enringing
> All eyes, with the sweet common light of thy bringing,
> Dost thou see how I suffer this wrong." *

Now from the most prominent character in the ancient tragedy, revert to the most prominent in the modern; from Prometheus to Hamlet. Prometheus represents to us the human will enduring and suffering —Hamlet the human will resisting and revolting. Necessities both have found, but in Prometheus the necessity is in external nature; in Hamlet the necessity is in himself. I do not think you will charge me with uttering the same truth in other words when I say that the soul of the Greek tragedy was the declaration of the mastery and tyranny of nature over man; the soul of the highest forms of the modern tragedy is the

* Mrs. Barrett Browning.—Prometheus.

revolt of man against the tyranny of nature, and even the tyranny of circumstance. Hamlet feels his freedom amidst the despotisms of time and space around him. Did you never notice that key passage to his whole character in the 4th scene of the 2nd Act, when he enquires of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "What have you deserved at the hands of fortune that she sends you to prison hither?

GUIL.—Prison my Lord?

HAMLET.—Denmark 's a Prison.

ROSEN.—Then is the world one.

HAMLET.—A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one of the worst.

ROSEN.—We think not so, my Lord.

HAMLET.—Why then 'tis none to you, for there's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so; to me it's a prison.

ROSEN.—Why then your ambition makes it one, 'tis too narrow for your mind.

HAMLET.—Oh God! I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself King of infinite space, were it not that *I have had dreams.*"

Now *those dreams* constitute the peculiarity of the modern drama. Christianity has proclaimed the freedom, and therefore the responsibility of Man, and that "it is within ourselves that we are thus and thus." Hence to us now there is no visible and impersonated Strength, and Force, and Vulcan chaining the being, we are the forgers of our own chains; we are the

creators of our own destiny; our theology contains two great principles, apparently most paradoxical,—they stamp the medal of our existence,—they colour and give complexion to our whole moral history; we cannot reconcile them; they are the Immutability of God; the perfect Freedom of Man. The Greeks beheld only the first; they "bound Nature fast to Fate," but they bound the Will fast to Fate too, and they did not leave the will even within the circle of benevolent fates, but girt it round with cruel as well as inexorable necessity; at any rate if they beheld Beneficence, they beheld it only as a Shadow, while they saw the Inexorable as a dire and terrible Reality. Yes human freedom we say is the glory and the grace of the modern drama. Is it not so throughout Shakspeare; compare the mighty Œdipus of Sophocles, frozen and transfixed with horror at *the unconscious crime* of which he is perpetrator, with Lear in the storm on the midnight moor, in the black dark tempest, do we not see that the destiny over the one has brought him to that horrid gulf of guilt, and that Lear has reached his wretchedness *by the misuse of his own freedom?* Or look at Macbeth saluted on the blasted heath by the weird sisters; do we not see that the Poet intended to teach us that they were only the shadows and shapes of pre-existing guilt within him? He went to them, they had no power to impel him to crime. Othello is the victim of his own passion; Romeo and Juliet are immolated on the pyre of their own passion. It is not Fate in the ancient sense of the word that dooms us, it is Passion. This indeed is the distinc-

tion between the ancient and modern tragedy; all tragedy, ancient and modern we define to be man mastered by the circumstances he cannot or will not control, but the ancient beheld man bound down by inexorable fate, the modern beholds man entangled and enmeshed in the misuse of his own freedom. Tragedy in the ancient world beheld man oppressed by a doom falling from above; in the modern, impelled by a fury lashing within. Great passions always seem to stand within infinite relations. The greatly beneficent, the gloriously good, seem ever to be impelled by sacred winds almost beyond their comprehension, to deeds of magnanimity beyond their conception; and the greatly malignant and malevolent, seem as if the unconscious sport of the vortex they cannot and wish not to control, bound like Mazeppa, but to their passions; impelled furiously along, they seem to be possessed of furies.

I see it but I cannot solve it, and so I leave it; perplexing marvel; how shall I unriddle the phrenzied passion of Cromwell, or Gustavus Adolphus; how shall I translate the stormy grandeur of the first, or the silence of the second Napoleon; how shall I read the rhapsody of St. Francis of Assisi, or the iron power of Hilderbrand; the indefatigable activity of John Howard, or Vincent St. Paul. Is it an affair of phrenology, a peculiar conformation of skull, or brain, or blood, or temperament? Is not that nonsense, a thousand thousand, and ten thousand times nonsense?

The reader will find happy illustrations of the two dramas in the writings of Talfourd. Ion, the beautiful

and the gentle, before whom a long life of love opens, unites his own volition with the prophecies and the oracles, and will of the Gods; the doom centres in him, but he will meet his fate boldly and cheerfully. Padilla is a patriot too, he beholds his land and countrymen trodden down by misgovernment and oppression, and he determines to throw himself into the gulf to save his land; they are both patriots—both victims; the one is beckoned by the oracle and the destiny without, the other is impelled by the humanity and freedom within.

Indeed we have often thought that Ion, Talfourd's most important Tragedy, is also the best introduction to the knowledge of the Grecian mind for those who know it not; it rises before us like a Grecian Temple, its clear white marble shining through the moonlight of those gorgeous night skies. How calm it is; true in the distance we hear, or seem to hear, the Bacchanalian shout of the luxurious King, but even he is stilled by the tragic atmosphere around him. Before the portico of the Temple there rushes a phrenzied assassin figure, the gleaming steel flashing in the moonlight, but these are momentary, and they rather deepen the calm than disturb it,—there is a wail of virgin woman's grief in the woods behind the temple—and it does startle the still air, and round the inner chambers of the temple you see the gleamy hase of the lamp, to tell that man watches over the silent movements of the gods. The Temple awes the passionate soul of man into silence too. Passion in the usual sense of the word does not obtrude itself here. It stands before us the Religion of Anti-

quity in its holiest *possible* shape, its purest *possible* form. Standing beneath the Temple the cheek is fanned by gales sweet and soft from the groves of roses, the gushing notes of the nightingale ring shrilly and sweetly through the balmy air. Thus the Tragedy of Ion rises like a Temple of Greece before the eye, and we know how that Temple embodied the religious faith. Cold—cold—how mournfully cold—those pillars of polished marble as they sprang from the rock seemed to say, "Poor children of men—poor insects of an hour—think you the fates will turn aside for you? Your sacrifices are vain; they are but the fulfilment and accomplishment of doom—unfaltering, unswerving, the fates move on; they tarry not—they hasten not; alike, the wail of woe, the shriek of despair, the plaintive sob of pathos, the imprecation, the denunciation." Do you not remember how when Œdipus approached the Temple of the Furies, the grove of doom, Sophocles lavished upon the exterior all the witchery of his descriptive power? He wreathed that terrible spot with every gentle and attractive grace, without all that could lull and charm, region of the dark hued ivy and the clustering vine, where the grove of the God was formed from a night of leaves; where the storms of winter never had power to shiver a leaf from the charmed branches; where the music of the fountains enchanted the ear, and the eye was always pleased with the rich gold and purple flowers. But you know that was the region of the dreadful Eumenides, there the furies held their seat, within was the dreadful dwelling of the Thunder God. That picture may serve

as a not inappropriate representation of what the Grecian religion was in its wholeness; that was the Grecian Temple—external calm, and internal terror; beautiful to the eye, dreadful to the heart. But Ion seems to be more than this, it is as if the tragedian had traversed the ruins of the Temple of Argos, but with a torch placed in his hand by a loftier, holier, and purer faith, and a plan of which those who reared the Temple were themselves ignorant; doubtless we are "all wiser than we know;" doubtless those ancients travelled in the light of shadows cast from heavens they had not seen, and to which their faith had never been directed.

But our Architect winding his way among those laurel bound and rose covered ruins saw the true proportions of the marble and the stone; when you stand over an error you very frequently see a hidden truth, or its true meaning. It would have been as impossible for Sophocles to have written Ion, as it would have been impossible of course for Talfourd to have written Œdipus Colonos, or Antigone; but what I distinctly mean to say is, that that Temple, that calm still moonlight, seen where human suffering is, because it is on earth, but where human despair *is not* is glorious in its beauty because its marbles gleam, and its characters speak from a light reflected from no altar of Apollo, dim, shadowy, spectral, as it stands in the silent Grecian night; we see that it is a twilight or a moonlight, borrowed from Christian teaching, that the dark, occult, and inscrutable mysteries of the ancient shrine have been radiated and halo'd by the glory and beauty of the modern faith.

Talfourd was one of our writers whose genius unquestionably assimilated to that of Wordsworth; he was among the most early of his generous and loving critics —his mind was formed greatly on the mould of Wordsworth's; he reflected in the same way the images of things; his style had not the same severity, the same purity of diction, the same discipline, and it delighted in a wealth and redundancy of ornament our Poet would certainly have disclaimed, but it is still true, the predominent mind in either is the same, those who admire Wordsworth cannot fail to admire Talfourd, though it is not so certain that all who admire Talfourd will admire Wordsworth; the relation between the two is that of Euripides to Plato, and Talfourd's name occurs to us on this page principally as the best illustration in his Ion of those principles which formed the Grecian mind, and were the foundation of the Grecian Tragedy.

Greece was consciously the darling of Talfourd's meditation and thought, as she was more unconsciously of Wordsworth's. If you enquire whence either derived his inspiration,

> "These thoughts
> Which reach beyond a (lawyer's*) sphere?" †

either might reply

> "From Athens;
> Her groves, her halls, her temples; nay her streets
> Have been my teachers. I had else been rude.

* Soldier's. † Athens Captive, 132.

I made
The city and her skies my home; have watched
Her various aspects with a child's fond love;
Hung in chill morning by the mountain's brow
And as the dawn broke slowly, seen her grow
Majestic thro' the darkness; till she fill'd
The sight and soul alike;—enjoyed the storm
Which wrapt her in the mantle of its cloud,
While every flash that shivered it, revealed
Some exquisite proportion, pictured once
And ever to the gazer;—stood entranced
In rainy moonshine, as, one side uprose
A columned shadow, pondrous as the rock
Which held the Titan groaning with the sense
Of Jove's injustice;—on the other, shapes
Of dream-like softness drew the fancy far
Into the glistening air; but most I felt
Her loveliness, when summer evening tints
Gave to my lonely childhood sense of home."

The "Ion" of Talfourd is constructed in harmony with a very prominent idea of the Grecian mind, and especially its Drama: an Idea which entered into its tragedy and pressed on the heart and life of the people. The idea of Doom, of unavertible and unconscious guilt, of crime unknown and unexpiated, of *unconsciousness*, in the victims of the just anger of the gods. What do you see in Ion? A plague-visited city. In the Temple of Apollo the priest watches for the return of the morning to break over the stricken soil. The language of the priest expresses what was really written deeply and most legibly on the heart and mind of Greece; they saw, did those ancient and intuitive observers of nature, that there is a subtle, but comprehensible connection

between moral and material disorder,—they were wrong in the application of their instances, they were right in their discovery of the law. "And dost thou think," says the Priest,

> "And dost thou think, these breezes are our foes,
> The innocent airs that used to dance around us,
> As if they felt the blessings they conveyed,
> Or that the death they bear is casual? No!
> *'Tis human guilt that blackens in the cloud,*
> Flashes athwart its mass in jagged fire,
> Whirls in the hurricane and pollutes the air,
> Turns all the joyous melodies of earth
> To murmurings of doom. There is a foe
> Who on the glorious summit of the state
> Draws down the great resentment of the gods
> Whom he defies to strike us."

This terrible idea of *the vengeance of the gods* gives power and grandeur to the most sublime and pathetic portions of the Greek Tragedy. To the dwellers of the old world the whole earth was beheld under a stain and a taint. The murder of Agamemnon and the adultery of Clytemnestra,—how they figure through all these important Tragedies. The Greeks, who "confessing themselves to be wise became fools," saw in all the extraordinary events of nature the special action of the gods: the Cranes of Ibycus, the dread Eumenides, the Erynnys, were everywhere present to their eye in all the dispensations of nature. In the thunder storm and the earthquake, in the plague and the pestilence, they saw—they saw, and shuddered as they saw the aveng-

ing Nemesis. They saw as in those words, so admirable in the translation,—that

> "Tho' the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small,
> Tho' he stands and waits with patience, with exactness grinds he all."

Another not less important principle of the Greek Drama receives in Ion exemplification: *the innocence of the victim* on whom the doom falls,—it is a mighty principle of the Greek Tragedian, and how wonderfully we behold it wrought out in the Antigone of Sophocles, that a bad man should never be honoured by being selected as an object of artistic chastisement; his fate is not calculated to excite our sympathies. Thus, on the contrary, the most sublime sight before which we can stand affected, is Innocence in Distress. Remorse is affecting; but Innocence, made to bear the doom of guilt, how the instinct of man turns to that picture; and there ran along the Greek mind that idea which has been woven into the moral constitution of our globe, that Innocence can expiate,—that Guilt has no power to sacrifice for itself,—and that only from the unoffending and the guiltless can the pure flame of expiatory sacrifice go up. That was an idea which held throughout the whole of the Grecian Drama, it may seem out of place here to point to the moral significance underlying this; but it is not less than marvellous that such a lesson should be read from the Temples of Antiquity.

Thus the difference between the Classical and Romantic Drama is easily discriminated from the foundation difference between the Grecian and the Gothic minds—

their various peoples and the forms of civilization they represent. Yet it is with a wisdom deeper than many of us are aware, that we speak of ancient and modern history, and ancient and modern civilization; there is little in common between the two, and yet we see much in common; there is in each a human heart, but circumstances so differ that surround each, that in effect they are utterly unlike. The freedom of the Gothic mind is glorious, it is exhilarating; we exult and joy amidst its manifestation. But to the Grecian the world was a mystery more awful than it is to us. Have you not often thought what terrible meaning there was in that mighty Œdipus of Sophocles? Did the Poet see, think you, all that we see? Œdipus the mighty, and the royal; Œdipus who solves the Sphinx riddle; who sits throned and illustrious, who saw so much in the heart of Nature, and was able to read so clearly, to disentangle mysteries, and to unwind sophisms; this very Œdipus is unable to unwind the awful mesh of his own destiny,—cannot see his own fate,—cannot spell the letters of his own life; that bright eye, that vivid mind, is all dark; is it not a most touching lesson to see him who had solved the Sphinx riddle, blind, blindly groping his way through the dark though lovely grove of the avenging Furies. Did not the great calm thinker, Sophocles, intend to say by this to his countrymen, "this is the measure and the bound of your knowledge. You great readers of Nature—you mighty children of the gods—there is blindness on your eyeballs, you wise spellers of fate and destiny. You are hemmed in by your own necessities.

You too are blind, you cannot see in what lies the essential freedom of things and men. The bands of iron are round you, the irresistible fates impel and goad you on to doom—doom—doom: destiny irresistible and unconquerable?"

Doom, this was the great shadow lying on the Grecian mind. Then the idea of innocence in the victim seemed to be necessary to this first idea, and this Talfourd again has attached to his drama. Ion is one of the most lovely and exalted conceptions in poetry. The artist has exhausted the resources of language and imagery on this gloriously beautiful being, who prays

> "If the great duty of my life be near
> Grant it may be to suffer, not to strike."

Is not the following portrait beautiful?

> "By no internal conflict is he trained
> For such hard duty; no emotions rude
> Hath his clear spirit vanquished; soon the germ
> Of his mild nature, hath spread graces forth
> Expanding with its progress, *as the store*
> *Of rainbow colour, which the seed conceals*
> *Sheds out its tints from its dim treasury*
> *To flush and circle in the flower.* No tear
> Hath fill'd his eye, save that of thoughtful joy
> When in the evening stillness, lovely things
> Press'd on his soul too busily; his voice
> If in the earnestness of childish sports
> Rais'd to the tone of anger check'd its force
> As if it feared to break its being's law,
> And faltered into music;—when the forms
> Of guilty passion have been made to live
> In pictured speech, and others have waxed loud

In righteous indignation, he hath heard
With sceptic smile, or from the slender vein
Of goodness which surrounding gloom concealed
Struck sunlight o'er it: so his life hath flowed
From its mysterious urn a sacred stream
In whose calm depth the beautiful and pure
Alone are mirror'd, which tho' shapes of ill
May hover round its surface, glides in light
And takes no shadow from them."

This is the Hero of Talfourd's Tragedy—the very portrait of a fitting Grecian victim, the very being to perform for his country some terrible lustration. He excites our sympathy more than the Iphigenia of Euripides, his grandeur of character is greater than that of Orestes, and he is so much more a victim than either of them. This soul that has moved through the open air in sunlight like an open stream is suddenly arrested in its course with the idea of destiny and sacrifice, and shadows black and dark hang over that beautiful and transparent life; he loses the airyness of his step,—there is given to those features a rigidness, to that character, a determination unknown because unneeded before, and as he paces the deserted courts of the plagued city, he startles the echoes there, as if a hero in armour trod these desolate aisles. As he treads the vaults where the dead kings of his line moulder, and marks the solemn range of the monarchs of Argos, holding still their dead sculptured monarchy in stone,—to him their eyes glare out with instinctive and frightful life, till their ponderous lips open, and amidst premonitory winds and storms he hears the murmured words "Hail! Hail! Ion

the Devoted!" With the knowledge of his own predestined mission there is within him a wonderful pity for guilt. Adrastus, the king, his unknown father, the luxurious Sardanapalus, the guilty cause of his city's doom, excites his pity. It is purity only that can pity guilt; because purity sees so clearly that guilt must be miserable,—that

> "'Tis the eternal law, that where guilt is
> Sorrow shall answer it."

When the King Adrastus and Ion meet, he wakes the better and nobler soul within the king, who has sought to drown happy, holy and innocent memories in a sea of sensuality, and now keeps up a wild Bacchanalian rout in his palace, while the gods are striking the city with plague—even as we know Thucydides has shown us in his dreadful picture of the Plague in Athens, and Boccaccio in his Picture of the Plague in Italy, and De Foe in his fearful portrait of the Plague in London, how invariably such horror, if it does not quicken to a more holy sensitiveness, lulls the sensualist to a more callous senselessness and sensuality. Ion stands above the fear of man or monarch, because he stands above the fear of death. In the comprehension of his election and his work, all things become simple and clear; to him the light within his own mind makes all things and circumstances, and duties clear around him; hence he pants to his duty, and gropes his way until he beholds the lamp which leads him to his destiny. When the messenger is needed by the sages, he says,

"Send me———
The coarsest reed that trembles in the marsh,
If heaven select it for its instrument
May shed celestial music on the breeze
As clearly as the pipe whose virgin gold
Befits the lip of Phœbus."

And before he seeks the presence of the king, he shows that he very clearly apprehends the meaning of the word he has to speak, for he has invoked others

"To shed
On ears abused by falsehood truths of power—
In words immortal, not such words as flash
From the fierce demagogue's unthinking rage
To madden for a moment and expire,—
Nor such as the rapt orator imbues
With warmth of facile sympathy and moulds
To mirrors radiant with fair images
To grace the noble fervour of an hour,
But words which bear the spirit of great deeds
Wing'd for the future; which the dying breath
Of Freedom's martyr shapes as it exhales,
And to the most enduring forms of earth
Commits, to linger in the craggy shade
Of the huge valley 'neath the eagle's home,
Or in the sea cave where the tempest sleeps,
Till some heroic leader bid them wake,
To thrill the world with echoes!"

Such is Ion. Ideal, not from that point of character which hinges on terror and on horror, but on pathos and on beauty, unfolding yet loftier beauties to the close, in the solitude of the gloomy wood, in the palace chamber of the king from whence he steps, his birth now known, himself at once monarch and victim.

You are not surprised that the Christian Tragedy reverses this, as you are not surprised that stoicism should be the loftiest ideal of the ancient world—the religion of that world trampled on, feeling, ascended above it; the religion of the modern world incorporates feeling in its faith. Christianity schools men into heroes.

The heroic element in Man evidently can only exist with his assertion of Individualism; if you make him a cipher for the service of the Fates, a mere wind instrument for the Fates to use and blow through, then it is evident you do entirely blot out all possibility of heroism save that which arises from calm enduring, bearing, and suffering. The ancient world does not contemplate Man as a verb active, and the modern philosophy is doing its best to teach the same dignified and do-nothing doctrine. Goethe is called the Modern Greek—of course he is—and as you read him you are sprinkled by the same spray that baptized the lines of Eschylus or Aristophanes. This is the meaning of the Philosophy of Indifference—the Centre of Indifference; "I can't help it, and so I don't care about it." The most prominent features of the Drama of any age will be index fingers on the dial plate of the times. This universal homage to Goethe, what is it? It is the denunciation of all heroism, of all earnestness.

> "All this is neither my coat nor my cake,
> Why fill my head with other men's charges;
> The fishes swim at ease in the lake
> And take no thought of the barges."*

* Goethe.—Carlyle's translation.

In which sublime religion there is certainly a lie at any rate *equal* to the truth. No, we cannot be indifferent as the Ancient Greek was indifferent. A profound melancholy underlies that character; *he could see no further;* but for us, we have to shut our eyes before *we can cease to see.**

* But come, you shall hear the religion of the Modern Greek—the great Goethe. Is it not in these lines, translated by J. S. Dwight?

VANITAS.

"I've set my heart upon *nothing*, you see;
Hurrah!
And so the world goes well with me.
Hurrah!
And who has a mind to be fellow of mine,
Why, let him take hold and help me drain
These mouldy lees of wine.

I set my heart at first upon *wealth!*
Hurrah!
And battered away my peace and health;
But, ah!
The slippery change went about like air;
And when I had clutched me a handful here,
Away it went there.

I set my heart upon *woman* next;
Hurrah!
For her sweet sake was oft perplexed;
But, ah!
The false one looked for a daintier lot,
The constant one wearied me out and out,
The best was not easily got.

I set my heart upon *travels* grand,
Hurrah!

And who would not rather be the author of Walenstein than of Faust? Who would not rather be Max

And spurned our plain old fatherland;
But, ah!
Naught seemed to be just the thing it should,
Most comfortless beds and indifferent food,
My tastes misunderstood.

I set my heart upon sounding *fame*;
Hurrah!
And, lo! I'm eclipsed by some upstart's name;
And, ah!
When in public life I loomed quite high,
The folks that passed me would look awry:
Their very worst friend was I.

And then I set my heart upon *war*.
Hurrah!
We gained some battles with eclat.
Hurrah!
We troubled the foe with sword and flame,—
And some of our friends fared quite the same.
I lost a leg for fame.

Now I've set my heart upon *nothing*, you see;
Hurrah!
And the whole wide world belongs to me.
Hurrah!
The feast begins to run low, no doubt;
But at the old cask we 'll have one good bout:
Come, drink the lees all out!"

We hope all our readers will say with us, that however fine the verses in the note may be as a lyric, they are miserable stuff to weave either a philosophy or a faith from. Yet, this is what some desire to see return, and we know that we shall be charged with a departure from the canons of a high and lofty ideal, in maintaining that *there is such a thing as a healthful earnestness and heroism.*

Piccolimini than Mephistophiles? If the wisdom of Mephistophiles is greater it is purchased at too high a price. Who would not rather dash his heart out against the bars of his prison than sit contented down within its dreary walls, and be the laureat of his jailer and his chains. Can you find sympathy with the lofty ideality of the men who behold in an insect's wing an object of absorbing interest, while the death rattle is heard in the throat of brave empires. It is very true some are yet born to the magnanimity of endurance, and that lesson came amongst others from the Cross of Calvary, but that is widely different from the magnanimity of indifference; but there is the magnanimity of resistance for Hero Hearts as well, and that is no less divine. Thus a man may be a leader and commander of the people, yet no demagogue; the spirits which shine through him and lighten his life and destiny, may be those in the absence of either of which we sink to brutality; Freedom and Conservatism, Loyalty to Law, and Faithfulness to Humanity. Since the decline and death of the ancient civilization, such men have been in the long gallery of ages, the pillars of fire lightening the world to development. Is not the history of the world the history of great men? Great men, they are the moral Andes, Alps, Pyrenees, and Himalays; they are the peaks who bare their brows for the lightning and the thunder; they are the caves who reflect the earliest and tenderest sunbeam. God save us from losing our faith in great men—great captains—men neither cowards nor fools, who will feel that on most things

the greatest number of heads must be in error, and who will not fear to tell that truth to the greatest number of heads. The scenery of the middle ages and the modern drama revolves round ideas which were common enough to the ages of the ancient Drama, but which had not entered at all into their conception of the moral sublime. They did not see that *revolution* must also be *evolution*. They concentred, as we have seen, they were necessitated to do all the life of their Tragedy within two or three actors; they did not diffuse the tragic genius over the whole nation's heart and life. No! they did not see that every man is the centre of a Tragedy. They did not see, did they? that all life heaves with a mighty soul, the fountain of a mysterious doom; they did not see that every man is venerable. Greece expired,—Rome was given to the barbarian hordes,—the ancient civilisation was rent in pieces,—the modern genius was evolved,—Christianity began her world wide wandering that this among other great truths might also be proclaimed to the world; man is free—man is sent hither to work out a destiny, as

"Ever in his great taskmaster's eye."

Thus lengthily—too lengthily it may be thought by many readers—we have pursued our way in a kind of monologue on the minds of the ancients, as developed in the highest forms of their literature. To some it may seem quite irrelevant to the subject of our volume; and the severe condemnation and deprecation of others, who may condescend to glance their eye over these

remarks, is quite appreciated by anticipation. And yet they are quite in place, and in keeping with the purpose and the intention of the volume. Wordsworth has not only been styled in an especial manner the Poet of Nature, but we have seen that his mind was coloured and impressed very greatly by those same influences which worked among the master minds of Greece. The sad and mournful does not so much shade the conceptions and forms of Wordsworth perhaps as some of his contemporaries, because while in his writings he does not yield that frequent homage to Christianity we could wish—and especially to its distinguishing and peculiar doctrines and mighty supernatural elements working for human salvation—he was yet a Christian; as a Christian, to him the darkness of Nature was fringed and glorified by the light of eternity. The sadness that may and does appear in his philosophy belongs to its earlier period, and after the middle period of his life it does not so much present itself as a personal experience and individual grief. Wordsworth was a Christian, not in the rationalist but in the real sense of the term. He says in one of his letters "The consolations which children and very young persons, who have been religiously brought up, draw from the Holy Scriptures ought to be habitually on the minds of adults of all ages for the benefit of their own souls, and requires to be treated in a loftier and more comprehensive train of thought and feeling than by writers has been usually bestowed upon it. I wish I were equal to any thing so holy, but feel that I am not. It is remarkable, however, that within

the last few days the subject has been presented to my mind by two several persons, both unknown to me, which is something of a proof how widely its importance is felt, and also that there is a feeling that I am not wholly unworthy of treating it." * Again, in a letter to the Rev. Henry Alford, he says, "For my own part I have been averse to frequent mention of the mysteries of Christian faith, not from a want of a due sense of their momentous nature, but the contrary. I felt it far too deeply to venture on handling the subject as familiarly as many scruple not to do. I am far from blaming them, but let them not blame me, nor turn from my companionship on that account. Besides general reasons for diffidence in treating subjects of Holy Writ, I have some especial ones; I might err in points of faith but I should not deem my mistakes less to be deprecated because they were expressed in metre." † He could not but allow these sentiments to appear in his writings. He could sing of

> "The unbounded might of prayer; and learned, with soul
> Fixed on the Cross, true consolation springs
> From sources deeper far than deepest pain,
> For the meek sufferer
> Whose medidative sympathies repose
> Upon the breast of Faith."

Such consolations are very different to those afforded by the forms of Nature, and they reach a quiet and

* Letter to Dr. Parry. Life of Wordsworth, vol. II. p. 363.
† Life, p. 364—365.

delightful realm to which the ancients in their happiest moments never attained. There was a fine faith in that expression of his consolation, that "the affairs of the world would go on still, as ever by the foolishness of man and the wisdom of God." Thus for the sense in which some persons claim Wordsworth as the Poet of Nature, there was no foundation in fact, although as we have admitted in previous portions of this volume, and admit still, there was great foundation in appearance. He ascended beyond the limits and boundaries of the sensational philosophy, as also did the old Greek, but whereas to him his intuitions were vagrant, and his impulses undirected and unschooled, to Wordsworth they were not without solution, he comprehended in the light of Faith, and Christian Truth the dark earth from which they sprung and the bright heaven to which they were destined. Still, when we have claimed for Wordsworth his place as a firm believer in Christian Truth, and as by no means to be confounded with the mere followers of Pantheistic vagueness and dreaming, we can wish that he had consecrated more especially his lofty meditative powers at the foot of the Cross. He is of all writers our chiefest and greatest transcendental Poet,* and it is from

* Mr. Edwin Whipple, for whom American Literature claims the rank of the American Macaulay, and to whom as far as we judge him below our great English critic, we cheerfully award our mede of praise for much instruction, although too epigrammatic for permanently worthy criticism, has very ably summed the transcendental characteristics of Wordsworth's Poetry in his Essay upon Him in the North American Review. He says, "All high imaginative poetry thus transcends the actual sphere of existence. But the poetry of the present age

this region that he has looked on the things of time and life from the lofty heavens. He has looked over the great relations of man and nature, entered into them and discussed and contemplated them as no poet had

is distinguished by what may be called its philosophical as well as its imaginative character. It grasps at the solution of the dark problems of man's existence and destiny. It grapples with the doubts and fears which perplex the understanding. It watches the movements of the soul, intent on fixing and giving shape to the most fleeting shades of thought and emotion. It is even familiar with the dark and tangled paths of metaphysics. Nothing is too humble for its love, nothing too lofty for its aspirations. The peasant, the monarch, the thinker, are all represented in its creations and ideal forms. Its end is not merely to please, but to inspire and instruct. Whether dealing with scepticism or faith, whether confirming or shaking common belief, it is always in earnest. It is never content with the careless play of fancy, or the cold exercise of reason, on subjects which relate to God, man, and the universe. Its philosophhy is not a dead formula, but a living faith, by which the value of institutions is to be tested, and in obedience to which all things must be ruled. It mingles with all the interests of mankind, and gives voice and form to its rights, its wrongs, and its aspirations. It is, as it were, the champion of humanity, declaring the infinite worth of the individual soul, and, both in anathemas and appeals, striking at all social and political despotisms. The force of its practical teachings, the influence of its lofty declarations of duty and freedom, depend on the fact, that man is a spiritual being, with thoughts and affections transcending the sensible world, and bearing a relation to a future as well as a present life. Thus poetry, as it makes the material universe more beautiful, and sublimely associating its properties with the operations of the mind, has, also, especially in the present age, thrown new consecrations around the nature of man, and weakened the force of those slavish bonds of opinion, which bind the victim of the world's tyrannies more strongly than with chains."—*Essays and Reviews.*

But Wordsworth in his highest transcendental flights never overlooked the beauties of lowly piety; how beautiful is the following in the Norman Boy:—

attempted to do before; thus meditating on the problem of human existence both in the individual and society, and resolving his problems into lofty verse, giving objective force and form to the loftiest spiritualities of the universe, it is scarcely wonderful if sometimes a hesitancy, and sometimes an appearance of labour characterises his performances. It is true that ease is the test of genius, but then the test must be qualified by the

"I lighted—opened with soft touch the chapel's iron door,
Past softly, leading in the Boy; and, while from roof to floor
From floor to roof all round his eyes the child with wonder cast,
Pleasure on pleasure crowded in, each livelier than the last.

For, deftly framed within the trunk, the sanctuary showed,
By light of lamp and precious stones, that glimmered here, there glowed,
Shrine, Altar, Image, Offerings hung in sign of gratitude;
Sight that inspired accordant thoughts; and speech I thus renewed:

'Poor Shepherd of the naked Down, a favoured lot is thine,
Far happier lot, dear Boy, than brings full many to this shrine;
From body pains and pains of soul thou needest no release,
Thy hours as they flow on are spent, if not in joy in peace.

Then offer up thy heart to God in thankfulness and praise,
Give to Him prayers, and many thoughts, in thy most busy days;
And in His sight the fragile Cross, on thy small hut, will be
Holy as that which long hath crowned the Chapel of this Tree:

Holy as that far seen which crowns the sumptuous Church in Rome,
Where thousands meet to worship God under a mighty Dome;
He sees the bending multitude, He hears the choral rites,
Yet not the less, in children's hymns and lonely prayer, delights.

God for his service needeth not proud work of human skill;
They please him best who labour most to do in peace his will:
So let us strive to live, and to our spirits will be given
Such wings as, when our Saviour calls, shall bear us up to heaven.'"

difficulty of the performance. The whole of the Waverley Novels is very easy work compared with the Excursion—almost as different as the relation of an anecdote and the writing of Hamlet—as different as the circuit of a village, and of the globe.

The inner principle of all art is, to subdue feeling; the difficult problem given to genius, is to discover how much to exhibit and how much to conceal; this is the difficult task in Painting, Sculpture, Oratory, and Poetry. By some it is said that Wordsworth concealed too much, but surely many of his poems bear witness for him that that charge was unfounded. In our day we are too fond of finding the work of feeling performed for us. Lessing, in allusion to the great piece of sculpture which was the text of his criticisms on art, says "Let Laocoon sigh, and the imagination may hear him shriek, but if he shrieks the imagination will not be able to advance one step higher or lower without placing him in a more endurable and therefore less interesting situation; it must then represent him either in his earliest sigh, or resting from his agony in death." So also Winklemann, quoted by Lessing, says, "As the ocean in its lower strata remains for ever at rest, let its surface be agitated as it may, even so the expression in the figures of the Greeks under the utmost tumult of passion exhibits profound tranquility of soul. Such a tranquility is shadowed forth in the face of the Laocoon, though in extremities of suffering. And not merely in the face. Every muscle is instinct with anguish. No hideous shriek is uttered. His misery pierces our hearts, but

the presiding sentiment after all is a wish, that we could support the situation of so miserable a being with the fortitude of so noble a one." * The calm that pervades the poems of Wordsworth is constant and unbroken, but is it not the calm of subduing art? it resembles nature, but like the quiet of nature it resulted from the wrath, and the strife of the elements, perhaps not so much the storm and rapture and disorder of the emotions; and as we have before said he schooled his sensibilities, and "did not make his present joy the subject of a song."

Mr. Henry Crabb Robinson, in his "Personal Recollections" of his tour with Wordsworth in Italy, says, "It often happened that objects of universal attraction served chiefly to bring back to his mind objects dear to him. When we were on that noble spot, the Amphitheatre at Nismes, I observed his eyes fixed in a direction where there was the least to be seen; and walking that way, I beheld two very young children at play with flowers, and overheard him say to himself, 'Oh! you darlings, I wish I could put you in my pocket and carry you to Rydal Mount.'" † Mr. Justice Coleridge says "You could not walk with him a mile without seeing what a loving interest he took in the play and working of simple natures. As you ascend Kirkstone from Patterdale

* For the best translation of Lessing's Laocoon, in our language, the reader is referred to that by Mr. De Quincey, in Blackwood's Magazine, vols. XX. and XXI. Notes by the translator, and the references to Mr. Wordsworth's principles of art add to its interest.

† Life, p. 329.

you have a bright stream leaping down from rock to rock on your right, with here and there silent pools. One of Wordsworth's poor neighbours worked all the week over Kirkstone, I think in some mines, and returning on Saturday evenings used to fish, up this little stream. We met him with a string of small trout; Wordsworth offered to buy them, and bid him take them to the Mount. 'Nay,' said the man, 'I cannot sell them, sir; the little children at home look for them for supper, and I can't disappoint them.' It was quite pleasant to see how the man's answer delighted the Poet." * And the Rev. P. Graves of Windermere, gives an experience of another character. "I remember Mr. Wordsworth saying that, at a particular stage of his mental progress he used to be frequently so rapt into an unreal transcendental world of ideas, that the external world seemed no longer to exist in relation to him, and he had to reconvince himself of its existence *by clasping a tree* or something that happened to be near him. I could not help connecting this fact with that obscure passage in his great Ode on the Intimations of Immortality! in which he speaks of

> 'Those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things
> Fallings from us, vanishings,
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized.'" †

It is true that experiences like all these are not un-

* Life, p. 305. † Life, p. 480.

usual to us, but the Poet puts them to school, and the two kinds together then produce in Wordsworth's writings what may be called *transcendental sympathy*: a sympathy shared with common natures, but allied to a sympathy with extraordinary moods and emotions of the human soul, and then we find the result in such a painting as the History of Margaret in the first book of the Excursion; or what will serve our purpose better for quotation here—The Mad Mother—a remarkable poem, of which we may say as of the Laocoon, we hear the sigh, and thrill with the imagination of the suppressed shriek.

"Her eyes are wild, her head is bare,
The sun has burnt her coal black hair;
Her eyebrows have a rusty stain,
And she came far from over the main.
She has a baby on her arm,
Or else she were alone;
And underneath the haystack warm,
And on the greenwood stone,
She talk'd and sung, the woods among,
And it was in the English tongue.

'Sweet babe! they say that I am mad
But nay, my heart is far too glad;
And I am happy when I sing
Full many a sad and doleful thing:
Then lovely baby, do not fear!
I pray thee have no fear of me;
But safe as in a cradle, here
My lovely baby! thou shalt be:
To thee I know too much I owe;
I cannot work thee any woe.

'A fire was once within my brain;
And in my head a dull, dull pain;

And fiendish faces, one, two, three,
Hung at my breast, and pulled at me;
But then there came a sight of joy;
It came at once to do me good;
I waked, and saw my little boy,
My little boy of flesh and blood;
Oh joy for me that sight to see!
For he was here, and only he.

'Suck, little babe, oh suck again!
It cools my blood; it cools my brain;
Thy lips I feel them, baby! they
Draw from my heart the pain away.
Oh! press me with thy little hand;
It loosens something at my chest;
About that tight and deadly band
I feel thy little fingers prest.
The breeze I see is in the tree:
It comes to cool my babe and me.

'Oh! love me, love me, little boy!
Thou art thy mother's only joy;
And do not dread the waves below,
When o'er the sea rock's edge we go;
The high crag cannot work me harm,
Nor leaping torrents when they howl;
The babe I carry on my arm,
He saves for me my precious soul;
Then happy lie; for blest am I;
Without me my sweet babe would die.

'Then do not fear, my boy! for thee
Bold as a Lion will I be;
And I will always be thy guide,
Thro' hollow snows and rivers wide.
I'll build an Indian bower; I know
The leaves that make the softest bed:
And if from me thou wilt not go,
But still be true till I am dead,

My pretty thing! then thou shalt sing
As merry as the birds in spring.

'Thy father cares not for my breast,
'Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest;
'Tis all thine own!—and if its hue
Be changed, that was so fair to view,
'Tis fair enough for thee, my dove!
My beauty, little child, is flown,
But thou wilt live with me in love;
And what if my poor cheek be brown?
'Tis well for me, thou canst not see
How pale and wan it else would be.

'Dread not their taunts my little Life;
I *am* thy father's wedded wife;
And underneath the spreading tree
We two will live in honesty.
If his sweet boy he could forsake,
With me he never would have stayed:
From him no harm my babe can take;
But he, poor man! is wretched made;
And every day we two will pray
For him that 's gone and far away.

'I'll teach my boy the sweetest things:—
I'll teach him how the owlet sings.
My little babe! thy lips are still,
And thou hast almost sucked thy fill.
—Where art thou gone, my own dear child?
What wicked looks are those I see?
Alas! alas! that look so wild
It never, never came from me:
If thou art mad, my pretty lad,
Then I must be for ever sad.

'Oh! smile on me, my little lamb!
For I thy own dear mother am:
My love for thee has well been tried:
I've sought thy father far and wide.

I know the poisons of the shade;
I know the earth nuts fit for food:
Then pretty dear, be not afraid:
We'll find thy father in the wood.
Now laugh and be gay, to the woods away!
And there, my babe, we'll live for aye.' "

Another of these noble Æsthetic Poems is the Egyptian Maid, or the Romance of the Water Lily. This beautiful and glowing gem is warm and bright with the colours of the British Mythology, with the magic of Merlin, the gallantry of Prince Arthur, and the knights of the Round Table; but the measure is as enchanting as the story, and we believe unique in its connection with a Poem. Of course the day of the story is a very ancient one, and in all its features it appeals to our wonder without defying all probability, and thus it pursues its way. Merlin, the Arch Wizard of the British Isles while pacing the Cornish Sands, looking in the direction of the Scilly Islands became aware of a bright Ship that seemed to hang in the heavens, very beautiful, and he knew her to be the Water Lily. The winds were soft, and they blew her on gently towards the land; so, like the Moon, from a little edge of light, she appeared to grow to a full orb, her sails stood forth to the wind, and her pendants streamed from the mast. Merlin gazed on her with admiration; she seemed like a winged creature; magic, thought he, never produced a more lovely creature than that. But Merlin had that fatal flaw in character to which it seems Wizards and Mechanists are alike subject—envy—he had a freakish will,

and a disposition to sneer at good thoughts, or scare them with defiance. And so said he my art shall help to tame her pride, and he raised the breeze to a blast, and the waves, so silent and peaceful rose too, and the blackening sky portended danger; he still uttered the thrilling word, and traced on the beach the potent sign; the clouds became blacker still, like spiteful fiends that vanish crossed by fiends of aspect more malign, and the winds roused the deep to yet more furious surges. But the worthy little Water Lily, a sea flower, a buoyant galley, supreme in loveliness and grace of motion, whether anchoring on the flood, or scudding over the hills and valleys of the waves, confounded the Wizard's craft, she seemed a something sprung out of the ocean, and she bounded over the sea billows and the huge waves leaping top gallant high; but the ocean heaved under magic, and could not spare the thing he cherished.

"Ah! what avails that she was fair,
Luminous, blithe and debonair,
The storm has stripped her of her leaves,
The Lily floats no longer! She hath perished.
Grieve for her,—she deserves no less,
So like, yet so unlike a living creature!
No heart had she, no busy brain;
Though loved she could not love again;
Though pitied feel her own distress
Not aught that troubles us, the fools of Nature."

But there was a cause for grief beyond the loss of the galley, for she was richly laden, she bore a fairer than herself, and in her struggles cast ashore a lovely maiden,

guileless and meek, all senseless lying on the strand. The Wizard had crept into a cave, half frightened at the result of his own spells, and there he sat, moody, and too late repentant; and he heard a voice, and saw a visitant who uttered to him these words. "Hear me, Merlin, this bark so frail, sailed under high protection, for she was on Christian service, and your power over her would have been vanity had she not had carved on her brow a sign of heathen power—the Goddess of the Lotus, or the Water Lily, the old Egyptian sign of immortal joy and love. Her course was for Britain, her freight a peerless damsel. Now hear me, Merlin, God reigns above, and there are strong spirits who may avenge this wrong done to the princess and her land, for the cry of lamentation will soon rise from Arthur's table, and the gallant Knights, and all who attended there to grace the bridal of the fair princess will attend to weep over the burial, caused by the blindness of thy malice; it is of no avail mourning over thy guilt, attempt to expiate thy sin; cold as the maiden is, by your art you may convey her to Arthur's Court ere life be fled for ever. My pearly boat will convoy her,

> That shining light that brought me down the sunless river
> Will bear me on from wave to wave,
> And back with her to this sea cave;
> Then Merlin for a rapid flight
> Thro' air, to thee my charge will I deliver.

Get ready the very swiftest of thy cars to convey her from hence when my part is done; look into thy own

prophetic book, if that fail consult the stars—farewell, be prompt and steady."

> "Thus to the Necromancer spake
> Nina, the Lady of the Lake,
> Who ne'er embittered any good man's chalice."

And as she spoke she disappeared, her gleaming shallop pursuing its way over the distempered deep, like a bird, or like a steed without a rein. She reached the Isle—no house nor haven was near—she landed, but saw no trace of wreck or ruin, but a carved Lotus was cast upon the beach—a flower graven in marble—a beautiful relic, the leaves twisted and folded round the face and bosom of a Goddess, concealing half, and half revealing. Still following the course of the shore, Nina came to the margin of a bay, and there she espied the object of her search; her eyes closed; her breath and her bloom all gone, but folded still in her attire, and unscarred; and as Nina stooped to kiss her, and to raise her from the ground, and place her in her own pearly shallop

> "Sleep fell upon the air and stilled the ocean,
> The turmoil hushed, celestial springs
> Of music opened, and there came a blending
> Of fragrance underived from earth,
> With gleams that owed not to the sun their birth,
> And that soft rustling of invisible wings
> Which angels make, on works of love descending."

And murmurings of approbation fell around her. "Thou hast achieved what none less pure in spirit could have performed; thy enterprise is blessed; air, earth, sky,

and heaven, betoken thy success." So they left the melancholy island of the shipwreck; the brine was smooth beneath the bark, and it carried in itself its own illumination, which shed a lustre on the slumberer's cheek, cold, and wan, and pallid. They soon arrived at the dim cavern where Merlin in deep thought awaited them. "Now, here," said Nina, "is my charge, I deliver her to thee, but where is the chariot?" "I have done," said he, "as I was bidden; my vehicle shall prove as trusty as thy boat, but the end of our adventure is hidden from me.

> Oh precious charge!
> If this be sleep, how soft! if death, how fair!"

And now, forth from the grotto's dimmest chamber, two mute swans approached; their plumes of dusky white, as Nina lifted the passive princess into the car, mounted up into the air, and the birds swept on with a progress smooth and swift, while Merlin by the side of the slumberer instructed the swans their way to Carleon. Soon the towers appeared in sight—notes of minstrelsy came on the wind—rich tents were seen spreading far and wide, and evidently some day of great joy was expected —on the ground alighted the car among the awe-stricken Knights and Dames, terrified in the midst of their pleasures,

> "For in that face they saw the last,
> Last lingering look of clay, that tames
> All pride; by which all happiness is blighted."

Said Merlin, "Mighty King and fair Lords, away with

your feasts, and tilts and tournaments; did you not see a marvellous rocking through this Palace of its Towers? did you not hear a clashing of swords? know then this is the maiden of Egypt, the wished-for bride. I have conveyed her from a rock on which she had been tossed by the tempest, it is a sad sight, but grieve not, we may yet restore her."

Said the King, "Your words are weak though your power is vast—this is the reward of her piety—these watery locks, and this bloodless cheek. And her father —what can abate his sorrow? and I, I have caused this woe, for when I had freed his realm from invading neighbours he plighted his word that he would turn to the Lord Christ our Saviour, and bestow his daughter on a Knight whom I should choose for his love and matchless courage; true she was born a heathen, but a fence of holy angels hovered around her, and she is lost to my Kingdom and your Court. Do not ask Oh Champions for whom I intended her; she who was meant for a bride is now a corpse; lay her in christian ground, with christian rites."

But Merlin stood forth. "The Tomb," said he "at any rate may not close upon her yet; the earth shall not yet hide her beauty; I wafted her hither, I interpose to check this pious haste of erring duty; I can lay bare the secret thou art determined on keeping; an attest shall be made, what bridegroom was ordained for her by heaven. I see things which may yet turn this weeping to gladness. Thy Knights here, bid them approach one by one and touch the cold hand of the virgin.

If any thing have power over death it is love only, and love has power, so for the favoured one the flower may bloom once more, but if life is gone from the cold clay for ever; if her doom be unchangeable, still some blest assurance shall emerge from the cloud for him, teaching him

> To bewail his loss;
> Not with a grief that like a vapour rises
> And melts; but grief devout that shall endure
> And a perpetual growth secure
> Of purposes which no false thought shall cross,
> A harvest of high hopes and noble enterprises."

"So be it," said the King, "here, where the Princess lies, begin the trial, Knights, each in order as ye stand step forth."

Is it not a noble picture for the imagination? and what a noble work for the painter to embody in immortal shapes and colours on his canvas that sublime conception; the Knights all standing round the chaste body of the drowned Princess, the relics of the sea weed still clinging to her robes; the Wizard bending over her, the King with outstretched hand bidding those peerless and chivalrous warriors of the Round Table to advance. And so to touch the pallid hand first stepped forth Sir Agravaine, but he won no sign; in silence then Sir Kaye. It is thrilling to the fancy to conceive it—Sir Dinas, Sir Percival, reverently touched the beautiful figure, but touched in vain, winning no reply or hint from heaven or earth. Sir Percival indeed was the devoutest of Champions, and he did not dare to

approach until he had crossed himself three times, and then approaching the ebon car,

> "The bier
> Whereon diffused like snow the damsel lay."

As he approached all hearts panted; wishes—fears—trembled in the balance, but all in vain. Then drew near, Sir Gawaine, mailed for tournament, with the beaver vailed, and timidly touched, but there was no sign; and then Sir Tristram laid aside his harp and came to the proof; the eyes of the fair Zonda bent eagerly forward, but he did not grieve, and she rejoiced that there came no change. Then Sir Launcelot beneath the bright eyes of the royal Guinever, who looked passing glad when his touch failed. Now came Sir Galahad, but even before he touched he stood entranced by those features, for he had beheld them in a noontide vision, for by murmuring stream, Nina, the good Enchantress, had shed a light round him, and prefigured to his sense the Egyptian Lady. He bowed his bright haired front, wrapt in his well known legendary Ermine he hung over the body.

> He touched with hesitating hand—
> And lo! those Birds far-famed through Love's dominions,
> The Swans, in triumph clap their wings;
> And their necks play involved in rings
> Like sinless snakes in Eden's happy land;—
> 'Mine is she,' cried the Knight; again they clapped their pinions.
> 'Mine was she—mine she is though dead
> And to her name my soul shall cleave in sorrow.'"

And now a tender twilight streak of colour brightened

over the face of the Princess, her lips quickened with an uncertain red; how deep was the awe, how deep was the rapture, when Death relenting

> "Allowed a soft and flower-like breath
> Precursor to a timid sigh,—"

To lifted eyelids. There was silence over them all while they

> "Watched the gentle strife
> Of Nature leading back to life."

But Death was defeated, and the victory won by the test of love. So the King said, "Take her to thy heart Sir Galahad, she is bound by indissoluble ties to thee though mortal change to the changeless immortality. The nuptials were not long delayed, and amidst the pomp and glory of that hour as the King led her towards the Altar, Angels hovered round and echoed these verses, guiding to the unlocking of the whole distress

> "Who shrinks not from alliance
> Of evil with good powers,
> To God proclaims defiance
> And mocks whom he adores."

Thus the power of Merlin had been all in vain had not "the good ship floated an idol at her prow."

Never by any critic do we remember to have seen this noble poem reverted to; it bears date 1830, and this exuberant and glowing fancy therefore was the production of our Poet when in his sixtieth year. It is difficult to say which most commands our admiration, the keen

and apposite invention, the flow of the music, so perfectly Æolian and appropriate, and withal so new, or the high moral intention of the whole Poem. Alas, never was there an age when the Æsthetic purpose of the poem needed so much to be kept in view; what a number of good ships do we behold everywhere wrecked in their ambassage and voyage by floating an idol at their prow; in other words, allowing evil to exist peacefully in the neighbourhood of good; nay patronising evil and allowing it to exist as the captain and the commander of goodness, and so negativing all the influences of the good, contravening its purpose, contradicting its word and its mission. Good people often wonder that their efforts do appear to fall paralyzed and powerless before the mailed strength of evil; it is very true that in the constitution of this world, the tares and the wheat do and must grow together, and tares spring up themselves in the field of the world, but when the husbandman himself plants and mixes together the tares with the wheat, and cultivates a latitudinarian indifference to the one and to the other, what can be expected but that the live wheat seed, overpowered and overshadowed, will moulder beneath the clay until a more invigorating and honest love shall call her to newness of life.

And in some measure the remarks we have made on the tragic side of life may be made here on the opposite, for the Romance of the Water Lily bears the same relation to Laodamia that Comedy bears to Tragedy; it is in the same sense that the Tempest and Midsummer Night's Dream are Comedies. As tragic emotions are

induced by the spectacle of prostrate powers, of vehement passions hurrying along to destruction, of ambition attempting to set itself above law, of love wearing itself out by its force and fury, of the will borne purposeless and helmless across the waves of life, so the Comedy in its highest teaching is the assertion of the mastery of the strong intelligent will over the wild ignorances and superstitions of the Calibans, and Sebastians, and even over the more beautiful Ariels. For the terms Tragedy and Comedy really represent the two opposite aspects of Life. The solemn and stately scenery of the Tempest is called Comedy, the intricate and exciting machinery of the Merchant of Venice is Comedy, and As You Like It, and the Winter's Tale are Comedy. There is little relation between the etymology and that which either the words Tragedy or Comedy have come to signify. The Alchemist and The Fox of Jonson are Comedy, and in all these illustrations what seems to be intended is, that there is an inherent feebleness in wrong, and an inherent strength in goodness; and hence the Diver of Schiller is a Tragedy, and the Fight with the Dragon is a Comedy. As Tragedy has been defined already, Comedy is only the reverse of that definition. The higher regions of serious Comedy represent man supported by goodness, and truth standing triumphant over falsehood, sensuality and chicanery. The Romance of the Water Lily is a Comedy of life. See how the bad passions and evil passions and powers, are made to wait upon and serve the good; see how temporary disasters turn into ultimate triumphs; how the agencies of nature

consent to become ministries to holy purposes, and the wild storms raised by evil spirits have a strong law opposed to them, over which they cannot leap; thus Nina is a kind of Prospero, and Merlin a sort of Ariel. There is no surer proof of the greatness of a Poet than when he allows in his works scope for the imagination to move, and so to speak, to swing and soar without passing beyond the compass of the Poem; thus indeed do Poets teach us that

"They are greater than they know."

In ballads like the Romance of the Water Lily Wordsworth is our English Schiller. The reader may remember also, as a companion, that beautiful ballad of Bulwer's, The Fairy Bride.

There is a class of poems in which Wordsworth has introduced the Historical Element, or the Mythological, "Artegal and Elidure" is an illustration; all that Wordsworth did he did well, and in this poem the artist is very prominent; it is extraordinary that so rich as are the early Myths of British History, more of our Poets have not laid them under contribution. In this poem the measure is as fascinating as the subject; there is a mutual harmony, a sustained elegance in the narrative, and the purpose is seriously asserted throughout.

Wordsworth never appears to have put pen to paper without distinctly recognising an intention, and hence always there runs beneath the outer crust of mere versification, a deep vein of more serious and philosophic sentiment. No man ever used verse more as a channel

than he; it was only the medium through which he spake; of many men, of even Southey it may frequently be said verse is all, the verse is as it were its own end; it is not used as the gift of God, but an amusement and a mere recreation; frequently a frolic with words; with Wordsworth it was a great Rhetoric, through which, as through an organ, he conveyed great truths.

What is the relation of Wordsworth to Dramatic Power and Literature? Had he that order of Genius which has been universally styled the highest? we think not. His genius was too profound to be universal—too lofty to be intensely and simply human. The Dramatist is not affected by all things; he reads and sees all things, and all people, and he expresses them, or paints them. He perceives each being, its difference and its centre, and he does not, in compelling its voice, make it to speak merely himself, he is concerned in order that it may speak itself—its own being. But with few exceptions the whole poems of Wordsworth are one long monologue; a descant of infinite subjects, from infinite points of vision, foliaged round with infinite beauties, but not the less a monologue. All men and women talk in the style of Wordsworth; they utter great things, beautiful things, but on the whole they are not so much their own as his; the stately march of the versification is relieved frequently by an equally stately and magnificent flight, and sometimes the poet descends from the high arch of his sublimity—from the tower and turrent of his observation, and discourses sweetly of village tales and affairs—of violets and of celandines

and daisys; of the humblest objects and most recondite themes, but even in all these there is still the mingling of the same stream of solemn and stately reference; he stoops to pick you a Forget-me-not from a hedgerow, and he stoops very gracefully, and he gives it into your hands with a very graceful air, and the things he says to you in presenting it are very beautiful,

> "To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,"

for instance. But still you see that it is a very tall man who stooped for that flower; he never for a moment relaxed the dignified expression, he carries into every walk and region himself; he has no abandonment in his verse or in the suggestions that come to him in his verse, he never indulges in a tenderness that has not solemnity in it, his love is always mingled with awful hints and reminiscences, and foreshadowings. Now this is the very reverse of the Dramatist's power—of the accomplished Dramatist you say—he has gathered that flower for us without touching it; he seems to say to us in his writings, come look here, I will be a mirror for you, you shall see things as they are, and actions as they are; the wonder of the Dramatist is, that he brings all things into and through himself, without allowing their essence to mingle at all with his individual being; the wonder of Wordsworth is, that he enters all things and all beings without allowing his essence to mingle with theirs, but retaining thoroughly his personal identity.

From the modifying power of art and doctrine in controlling the estimate of Human Life,—and of which again more will be said in future pages,—we may now make some remarks on Wordsworth in relation to Scenery. Wordsworth the Landscape Painter, Wordsworth the Expositor of External Nature. We have before remarked how accurately defined all the shapes are which abound in his verses; sometimes it may seem as if they were too bare, and even hard, the spirit of the mountains breathed through his descriptions. It is the accuracy of landscape finish which imparts the charm to "The Waggoner," all whose verses are a succession of panoramic pictures; the impression always produced on our minds by that delightful Poem is like that produced by some of the best Dutch Masters: the colours are deep, the narrative and characters so homely, and the reality is so remarkably burnt into the mind while reading, but it is with all the landscape scenery of the Poet as with this, the truth of colour grows upon the mind the longer the object is regarded. We have often thought of those innumerable lines in Wordsworth which might be subjects for Painters, by ministering to their colour and their imagination. There are few poets who have had so little justice done them in this way—Byron and Moore and Tennyson and Longfellow have all given work and suggestion to the artist, and the day of Wordsworth's prerogative will come. The Poet reaches the highest region of Art when he ministers to his brother Artists; the greatest Poet has furnished the greatest number of subjects for Painters of

every degree and kind of eminence. And this among other things exhibits to us the superiority of the Poet. The Poet derives little from the Painter or the Sculptor; they refresh his impressions; they are a delightful recreation, but they cannot do for him what the mind in its own field can do for itself. There are no forms so perfect, or so fair, there are no colours so rich as those which the Poet's own eye can see; for the Painter's art lies in *per*ception, but the Poet's in *con*ception. Painting therefore is usually the delight of secondary natures, and it is the favourite rather of men of taste than of genius. Perhaps a man of the highest power of imagination could not be a painter—never was a painter—for painting taxes the fancy most. But the painter would find in some of Wordsworth's single lines and couplets glorious subjects for his pencil: take first that picture of the Yew Trees, surely in harmony with the wizard power and glamoury of Maclise,

> "Those fraternal four of Borrowdale,
> Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
> Hugh Trunks!
> Beneath whose sable roof
> Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked
> With unrejoicing berries—ghostly Shapes
> May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
> Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton
> And Time the Shadow; there to celebrate,
> As in a natural temple scattered o'er
> With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
> United worship:"

What a subject for Danby is there in such a line as that

"The sea that bares her bosom to the moon."

Or would not a dash of his fiery red pencil give power and effect to that evening when

"Clouds, lingering yet, extend in solid bars
Through the grey west; and lo! these waters, steeled
By breezeless air to smoothest polish, yield
A vivid repetition of the stars."

For ourselves we can always in reading Wordsworth make a gallery of paintings, and find Landseer, Hunt, Cooper, and always Turner among the artists, indeed in many particulars he bears a striking resemblance to the last mentioned name, in the contempt with which many affect to mention him, in the mist that seems—and only seems—to hover over the canvas, and in the clear and well defined shapes that speedily grow from the canvas to the eye.

But the reader does not need to be informed that the circumstance giving the greatest and most marked peculiarity to the scenery of Wordsworth is the power of identifying thought with scenery. Scott described, but, with the addition of richer and more imaginative diction, and a delight to hover over subjects demanding a greater depth of colouring, he described as De Foe would have described; but all the brooding imageries of nature entered into Wordsworth's mind, and were thrown forth as imaginations. He remarked once to a friend, "S—, in the work you mentioned to me, confounds imagery and imagination. Sensible objects really existing, and felt to exist, are *imagery;* and they

may form the materials of a descriptive poem where objects are delineated as they are. Imagination is a subjective term; it deals with objects not as they are, but as they appear to the mind of the Poet. The imagination is that intellectual lens through the medium of which the poetical observer sees the objects of his observation modified both in form and colour. A beautiful instance of the modifying and investive power of the imagination may be seen in that noble passage of 'Dyer's Ruins of Rome,' when the Poet hears the voice of time,

> 'The Pilgrim oft
> At dead of night, mid his oraison hears
> Aghast the voice of time disparting towers.'

And in Thompson's description of the streets of Cairo, expecting the arrival of the caravan which had perished in the storm,

> 'In Cairo's crowded streets
> Th' impatient merchant, wondering waits in vain,
> And Mecca saddens at the long delay.'"

In instances like these Wordsworth's writings are eminently rich—richer than any Poet's of England after Shakspeare and Milton. Scott, so felicitous in description, never or rarely arrests the pulse, or presents a vivid picture kindled by thought; his descriptions look like faithful memories, and no more.*

* Take for instance the beautiful stanza in the Affliction of Margaret.

> "I look for Ghosts, but none will force
> Their way to me. 'Tis falsely said

We have often had occasion to notice the absence of humour in great writers, but never certainly have we had so much occasion to regret its absence as in reading

> "That ever there was intercourse
> Between the living and the dead;
> For surely then I should have sight
> Of him I wait for day and night
> With love and longing infinite."

This we call Poetry because it is invented *or made* by the writer entering into the mind of a supposed person. Next, take an instance of the actual feeling truly experienced and simply expressed by a real person. "Nothing surprised me more than a woman of Argentière, whose cottage I went into to ask for milk as I came down from the glacier of Argentière, in the month of March, 1774. An epidemic dysentry had prevailed in the village, and a few weeks before had taken away from her, her father, her husband, and her brothers, so that she was left alone with three children in the cradle. Her face had something noble in it, and its expression bore the seal of a calm and profound sorrow. After having given me milk, she asked me whence I came, and what I came there to do so early in the year. When she knew that I was of Geneva, she said 'she could not believe that all Protestants were lost souls; that there were many honest people among us, and that God was too good and great to condemn all without distinction.' Then after a moment of reflection she added, 'But that which is very strange is that of so many who have gone away, none have ever returned. I,' she added, 'who have mourned my husband and my brothers, who have never ceased to think of them, who every night conjure them with beseechings to tell me where they are and in what state they are! Ah, surely if they lived anywhere they would not leave me thus! But perhaps,' she added, 'I am not worthy of this kindness, perhaps the pure and innocent spirits of these children,' and she looked at the cradle, 'may have their presence, and the joy which is denied to *me*.'"—*Saussure Voyages dans les Alps*. Chap. XXIV.

This we do not call Poetry, merely because it is not invented, but the true utterance of a real person.

RUSKIN'S MODERN PAINTERS, Vol. III, p. 12.

Wordsworth. Humour shades down to harmony, and proportions forms and scenes which might otherwise have been sufficient to mar the beauty of the picture; it diffuses so gentle and mellowing a light—it throws into the shade all that might obtrude itself too ostentatiously on the canvas—it contains within itself the perception of differences, and resemblances; it is hence therefore the foundation of the perception of the ludicrous. In most instances the Poet who has succeeded most in awakening the sense of Beauty has had his mind most alive to the sense of Deformity; this is a gift of which we have no instances in the works of our Author, and most of his occasional meannesses of expression are the result of the absence of it; the wonder is that a man so peculiarly constituted did not more frequently topple down headlong from the heights of fancy, to the sprawling regions of fun. It would certainly be possible to fill some pages with illustrations of his entire obliviousness to all incongruity in scenery or circumstance. The critics, a race of men endowed by their moral constitution with a moral squint, insisted on seeing these incongruities alone, and would not notice the sublimities and beauties to which they were allied.

Had there been any power to perceive the disharmonious contrasts of things, would it be possible for any poet to have linked together the latter part of the following verses with the former, in the whole of which the Poet is descanting on the *Influence of the Spiritual World on the Course of Human Action.*

"Dread Spirits! to confound the meek
  Why wander from your course so far
Disordering colour, form and stature!
Let good men feel the soul of Nature
  And see things as they are.

Yet potent Spirits! well I know,
  How ye, that play with soul and sense,
Are not unused to trouble friends
Of goodness for most gracious ends—
  And this I speak in reverence.

But might I give advice to you,
  Whom in my fear I love so well;
From men of pensive virtue go
Dread Beings! and your empire show
  On hearts like that of Peter Bell.

Your presence often have I felt
  In darkness and the stormy night;
And, with like force, if need there be,
Ye can put forth your agency
  When earth is calm, and heaven is bright.

Then coming from the wayward world,
  That powerful world in which ye dwell,
Come, Spirits of the Mind! and try,
To-night, beneath the moonlight sky,
  What may be done with Peter Bell!

* * * * * * *

Let them whose voice can stop the clouds,
  Whose cunning eye can see the wind,
Tell to a curious world the cause
Why, making here a sudden pause,
  The Ass turned round his head *and grinned*.

Appalling process! I have marked
  The like on heath, in lonely wood;

And, verily, have seldom met
A spectacle more hideous—yet
It suited Peter's present mood."

There were the passages full of beauty, yet containing these strange and grotesque paragraphs, which were cited by the Jeffrey tribe to prove the Poet a fool; the usual method indeed, as in the Edinburgh Review, was to pounce upon a line or two, and it must be admitted, lines there were likely to impress the mind with the idea of folly; to quote the whole passage would have been very fatal. All our readers have read the lines which have been now for some time emended, in the Idiot Boy,

"A household Tub like one of those
In which the women wash their clothes."

The Lyrical Ballads contain many such lines, which surely must be regarded as deformities, but arising from the absence of that humour which would have saved the poem from the blemish; such blemishes were the more distinguishable from the stately style of the ordinary writings, they had the effect of an ass's head, or a grinning hyæna, on the tops of a column in an Athenic Parthenon. To the Poet they did not seem at all wayward or unusual, he had no sense of the Ludicrous, and we apprehend that any rectification which took place resulted rather from the intervening commentaries of his friends than his own instinctive teachings. If this be alleged as a grave defect, it was a defect in which our Poet had the companionship probably of the great-

est masters of the ancient classical world—with Milton and Schiller,—with Spenser and some of the greatest writers of his own and the subsequent age; and it will perhaps be the usual defect of those who accustom their eyes to too intent an observation of ideal beauty, as the eye becomes dazzled and cannot see inferior objects after too long gazing on the sun.

Mr. Carlyle in his estimate of the genius of Schiller * has remarked on his "singular want of Humour." He goes on to say, "He who wants it, be his other gifts what they may, has only half a mind, an eye for what is above him, not for what is about him or below him. Now among all writers of real poetic genius we cannot recollect one who in this respect exhibits such total deficiency as Schiller. In his whole writings there is scarcely any vestige of it, scarcely any attempt that way. His nature was without humour, and he had too true a feeling to adopt any counterfeit in its stead. Thus no drollery or caricature, still less any barren mockery, which in the hundred cases, are all that we find passing current as Humour, discover themselves in Schiller. His works are full of laboured earnestness—he is the gravest of writers." These remarks in every syllable apply to Wordsworth.

Upon this verdict of Carlyle, Sir Bulwer Lytton has commented with great force, entirely disputing, and we cannot but think justly and triumphantly the claim of Humour to be regarded as the test—

* Miscellanies, vol. II., pp. 200—201.

the touchstone of the Poetic Faculty. After pointing to the absence of Humour in Homer, Sir Edward says, "Milton's elephantine struggles after humour do not seem to us as Mr. Carlyle indeed almost allows, to establish any case for his proposition. But Milton is not a solitary exception: for neither in Virgil, nor in Lucretius, nor in Dante, nor in Tasso, nor in Spenser can we find that Humour was the finest perfection. In brief we should go almost even to the opposite extreme, and say that with some few exceptions, the greatest poets of every land have shown in no faculty a more marked deficiency than in that of Humour. It were hard to say that 'they had but half a mind,' if so in their case, we must think with Hesiod, 'that the half is better than the whole,' the whole of all save Shakspeare; and (if Mr. Carlyle insists upon it) save Goethe also. We do not dispute nor seek to lower the merit of Humour, but how many of the old 'Kings of Melody' would be dethroned by the revolutionary doctrine, that what Mr. Carlyle himself truly calls "the exponent of low things' is the finest perfection of poetic genius? Let us admire Hogarth without lamenting that Raphael had only 'half a mind.'"* The Artistic importance of Humour for certain purposes it is impossible to over-estimate; unfortunately, shall it be said, the work Wordsworth set before himself eminently demanded the eye and the soul of the humourist; it was not needed by Dante, or Milton; by Tasso, or even by

* Bulwer's Life of Schiller, p. 154.

Schiller; it was not even needed by Coleridge, although he possessed more than Wordsworth, for these poets did not paint characters and events beneath their own mental life; they preserved a measured and stately dignity, they walked among the things of the world without attempting to compel within the circle of human sympathies a degraded and low born class; the effect of Wordsworth's poems, or of many, was the same as if he had introduced a Pariah into an assembly of Brahmins, or a Cagôt into a company of French Courtiers; or as if a person afflicted by *goitre* had been introduced on the stage, and made the centre of sympathy, and the life and pervading genius of the Tragedy; in such a case it would be of no avail to say is not there a human heart—human passions, and powers; it would be of no avail—the eye would be affected as by an unseemly spectacle; and our poet did not possess the power to shade down objectable features, and melt them into an universal harmony. With Lord Jeffrey the fact of a man being a beggar or a leech gatherer, was decisive against his occupying any place in poetry, though it would be difficult to tell why he should be rejected while Edie Ochiltree and Stenie Mucklebacket should be allowed to affect us as they do; poetical conceptions surely, as Jeffrey himself would admit. But Wordsworth did think too frequently, more than the poetic artist should think, of the beggar's or pedlar's attire; he insisted too much on the visible circumstances of degradation; the accomplished humourist would have kept these more concealed. Yet he set before himself a more

difficult task perhaps than ever poet set himself before, and the slight shades in which he failed are few indeed compared with his glorious triumph and success. He vindicated the reality of a human soul beneath a pedlar's pack or a beggar's rags.

And yet the following illustration would seem to indicate that there was by no means an entire absence even of Humour.

"Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
To achieve the higher triumph; not unfelt
Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
The awful truths delivered thence by tongues,
Endowed with various power to search the soul;
Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place!—
There have I seen a comely bachelor,
Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,
And, in a tone elaborately low
Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze
A minute course; and, winding up his mouth,
From time to time, into an orifice
Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small,
And only not invisible, again
Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.
Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
The Death of Abel, Shakspeare, and the Bard
Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme
With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,
And Ossian (doubt not 'tis the naked truth)
Summoned from streamy Morven—each and all

Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers
To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped
This pretty shepherd, pride of all the plains,
To rule and guide his captivated flock."

That our poet's critics were dishonest is beyond a doubt, they pronounced their verdicts from the exceptions in his verse for which they were constantly searching, and not from the beauties which were obvious to every eye. Shakspeare, Milton, and Pope, have been convicted of similar sins, but they have never met with so much critical injustice; but in truth there were many objectional, nay, egregiously ridiculous couplets; most have been pruned away, some yet remain; formerly in early editions these lines stood in the Thorn,

"And to the left *three yards beyond*,
You see a little muddy pond
Of water never dry;
I've measured it from side to side,—
'Tis three feet long and two feet wide."

As to the Idiot Boy, we are ourselves compelled to give him up to the critics, to work their will upon him.

"And Susan's growing worse and worse,
And Betty's in a sad *quandary*;
And then there's nobody to say
If she must go or she must stay,
She's in a sad *quandary*."

What a vision was that, now also expunged from the poem, beheld by Peter Bell one night on the water,

"Is it a party in the parlour,
Crammed just as they on earth were crammed;
Some sipping punch, some drinking tea,
But as you by their faces see—
All silent and all damned!"

We have never been able to make out the mystery of the Two Thieves, the grandfather and the grandson, who both go on a pilfering expedition together,

"And yet, into whatever sins they may fall,
This child but half knows it, and that not at all.

Here is a description of a beggar woman,

"She had a tall man's height or more,
No bonnet screened her from the heat;
A long drab-colored cloak she wore,—
A mantle reaching to her feet;
What other dress she had I could not know,
Only she wore a cap that was as white as snow."

So again we have some rich verses in Goody Blake and Harry Gill,

"Oh! what's the matter? what's the matter,
What is't that ails young Harry Gill?
That evermore his teeth they chatter,—
Chatter, chatter, chatter, still.
Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,
Good Duffill grey and flannel fine;
He has a blanket on his back,
And coats enough to smother nine."

But we feel that this is ungenerous and ungracious work, and as if we were guilty of the sin of uncover-

ing our father's shame, while we linger over these peccadillos of our poet's style. Many of these sins against the heraldry of poetry have been removed from successive editions, but they were at one time prominent enough, and those who had no sympathy with the deeper meanings, and the moral significancies of the poems as a whole, delighted to expose these faulty couplets to the eye as a specimen of what the whole volumes were like. Wordsworth was treated as justly as Shakspeare would be, were he tried by the conceits and "quips and cranks and wanton wiles" of "Love's Labour Lost," or Milton by detatched lines of weakness, or his famous description of the discovery of gunpowder, and its application in the war in Heaven, to the overthrow of the Rebel Angels.

In all estimates of Wordsworth the opinion of Lord Jeffrey has ever had great weight, and he most pertinaciously laboured from the last to the first to crush the genius of both Wordsworth and Coleridge, mangling and distorting, picking and selecting from their poems all that might from its very juxtaposition create laughter or ridicule; he did all that man could do, as if hurried along by personal spleen, and for a long time he succeeded no doubt, and it is serious to think it, the Edinburgh Review kept back by many years, probably a quarter of a century, the popularity of Wordsworth, and thus kept bread from his mouth at a time when he was a comparatively poor man. It may well rouse in our minds a good hearty English indignation against the reviewing craft in general, and if we may say so,

against Lord Jeffrey in particular. The powers which he possessed were all concentrated to a purposed and strained misconception of the poet's meaning; he raised as loud a shriek over the most approved and beautiful passages as those which might indeed seem to be the fair mark for his cavil and criticism; he cast beneath him all literary generosity, and disdaining all attempt to regard these poems from an Artistic or an Imaginative point of view, he pounced upon them like a bookish Blue Beard, delighted to mangle them in his cave.

In truth we must confess ourselves a thousand-fold more oblivious to the mental worth of Lord Jeffrey than was Jeffrey to the poetic power of Wordsworth. Amidst the homage of the crowds we are frequently compelled to ask, what is it all about? In Edinburgh we can understand that political partizanship gave to him immense power, but strangers like ourselves who are to him in something of the relation of posterity, we are compelled to ask, what has the man done? has he ever given to the world one solitary new idea? has he ever disentombed a forgotten genius, or awakened a neglected sympathy, or happily illustrated an obscure principle or work? His Essay on Beauty is in no sense of the word his; it is merely a condensation of the Essay of Dr. Allison, yet this is his most meritorious performance; his writings for the most part are spiritless and tame, cold and idealess, and we will venture to predict that in less than half a century he will be not only entirely forgotten, but the prying literatist who shall explore the out of the way shelves of the library where his

works are laid, will marvel even as we marvel now, by what chance they obtained so wide, although fleeting a popularity, till he shall recur to the well known principle that the more clear the light which shines for one age is, the more certain is it that it contains little light which posterity and futurity may admire.

The foregoing citations do, it must be admitted, look odd, but not one of them, and we think they are the worst, was quoted by Jeffrey; he unfortunately for his reputation quoted for reprobation verses which have since become household words in all the homes of taste and genius. Thus the Ode on the Intimations of Immortality is "the most illegible and unintelligible part of his publication." In the Ode to the Cuckoo "the author striving after force and originality produces nothing but absurdity." Of the touching "Address to the Sons of Burns," after visiting their father's grave, he says, "Never was any thing more miserable." "The first poem is a dull one about Rob Roy." That most touching poem, "the Ode to the Daisy, is flat, feeble, and affected; artificial in diction and encumbered with heavy expletives." The taste of Jeffrey was formed upon a school whose empire it is to be hoped is for ever at an end; a school, the canons of whose criticism were formed not from the teachings of nature, but from the morbid vices of stiff and formal conventionalism. That taste turned affectionately to all sorts of stilted heartlessness, and inflated bathos if only conveyed through a perfect dactyl or anapæst, the propriety of the feet in the line was the great question of that school; it was

not important to the garden that the flowers should be lovely, but that the box hedges should be well cut, and the trees and shrubs trimmed into triangles. With the men of the Jeffrey School, Campbell would have outweighed a hundred Wordsworths, and Campbell well expresses what that School was; it delighted in the pompous, the sonorous, inflated sentiment, yet many a high-toned lyric anatomized too closely only became a subject for laughter; while in Wordsworth many a poem that at first awakened contempt, on close inspection was found to breathe from the deepest places of the soul "most eloquent music."

But deep indeed is the ignorance of those who charge on our writer invariable poverty of language and versification; the whole compass of our literature contains no diction more affluent and ample, more rich and melodious, than may be produced from those portions in which he speaks in his own character; but then, it will be remembered, that he *is* the speaker. It is his diction, he does not put the classic speech and association into the mouths of mere peasants and woodmen; "every man in his own order" is the rule of our poet. In the Thorn, and in the Waggoner, the sentiments and the language alike come from the minds of simple men and lowly cottagers; but when the poet himself is wrought and rapt to inspiration, then he can pour along the utterances of passion, and declamation, apostrophe and prosopopœa, his language leaps forth like the live lightning, and his words echo and peal with all the majesty of thunder, or torrents among the hills.

It is very amusing and noticeable, that Jeffrey, when he alighted on such a passage in which all the nature of the poet was strung up to rapture of sentiment and speech, denounced it as "rant:" how appropriate, that the man who could not comprehend nor feel the simplicity of speech, was also morally deaf to its sublimity. The following is the passage which that very eminent critic pronounced to be "rant and stuff." *

"Such was the boy—but for the growing youth
What soul was his when from the naked top
Of some bold headland he beheld the sun
Rise up and bathe the world in light!—He looked—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth,
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
Beneath him. Far and wide the clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces could he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle; sensation, soul, and form
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed—he proffered no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love."

Or to cite another illustration, what can be finer in language than the following on The Clouds?

* Edinburgh, vol. xxiv. p. 14.

"Or are ye jubilant,
And would ye, tracking your proud lord the sun,
Be present at his setting; or the pomp
Of Persian mornings would ye fill, and stand
Poising your splendours high above the heads
Of worshippers kneeling to their up-risen God?
Whence, whence, ye clouds! this eagerness of speed?
Speak, silent creatures.—They are gone, are fled,
Buried together in yon gloomy mass
That loads the middle heaven; and clear, and bright,
And vacant doth the region which they thronged
Appear; a calm descent of sky conducting
Down to the unapproachable abyss,—
Down to that hidden gulf from which they rose,
To vanish—fleet as days, and months, and years,
Fleet as the generations of mankind,
Power, glory, empire, as the world itself—
The lingering world, when time hath ceased to be.
But the winds roar, shaking the rooted trees,
And see! a bright precursor to a train
Perchance as numerous, overpeers the rock
That sullenly refuses to partake
Of the wild impulse. From a fount of life
Invisible, the long procession moves
Luminous or gloomy, welcome to the vale
Which now they enter, welcome to mine eye
That sees them, to my soul that owns in them,
And in the bosom of the firmament
O'er which they move, wherein they are contained,
A type of her capacious self and all
Her restless progeny.
A humble walk
Here is my body doomed to tread, this path,
A little hoary line, and faintly traced,
Work, shall we call it, of the shepherd's foot,
Or of his flock?—joint vestige of them both.
I pace it unrepining, for my thoughts

Admit no bondage and my words have wings.
Where is the Orphean lyre or Druid harp
To accompany the verse? The mountain blast
Shall be our *band* of music; he shall sweep
The rocks, and quivering trees, and billowy lake,
And search the fibres of the caves, and they
Shall answer, for our song is of the Clouds,
And the wind loves them; and the gentle gales—
Which by their aid re-clothe the naked lawn
With annual verdure, and revive the woods,
And moisten the parched lips of thirsty flowers—
Love them—and every idle breeze of air
Bends to the favourite burthen. Moon and stars
Keep their most solemn vigils when the clouds
Watch also, shifting peaceably their place
Like bands of ministering spirits, or when they lie,
As if some Protean art the change had wrought,
In listless quiet o'er the ethereal deep
Scattered, a cyclades of various shapes
And all degrees of beauty. Oh ye lightnings!
Ye are their perilous offspring; and the sun—
Source inexhaustible of life and joy,
And type of man's far-darting reason, therefore
In old time worshipped as the God of verse,
A blazing intellectual deity;—
Loves his own glory in their looks, and showers
Upon that unsubstantial brotherhood
Visions with all but beatific light
Enriched—too transient were they not renewed
From age to age, and did not, while we gaze
In silent rapture, credulous desire
Nourish the hope that memory lacks not power
To keep the treasure unimpaired. Vain thought!
Yet why repine, created as we are
For joy and rest, albeit to find them only
Lodged in the bosom of eternal things."

No! let the reader say what he will, making some allowance for the difference of the individuality as represented in the poems of the men, and we will dare to say that neither in the writings of Shelley, or Byron, will be met with more prolonged and protracted streams of splendour,—more loftily sustained pomp of language, —more inflamed and gorgeous cloud painting than in Wordsworth. It is true perhaps that the most splendid offerings in this field were written, as the "Paradise Lost" was written, when the bard was sinking into the winter of life. His language glowed, his imagination flamed and fused at the time when most poets tame their idea and their verse. We have an instance of this in the "Musings near Aquapendente," written when nearly seventy years of age: this, is to his last days what Tintern Abbey was to his first. It is a most glorious combination of the colours of reflection and passion, memory and introspection blend their hues wonderfully through all its lines. How affecting the tone in which the poet rises out of the despondency caused by the recurrence to painful memories, of lost friends and departed poets, to the freshness of the blooming broom by his side, and the light shining over the walls of ruined palaces and deserted cities.

It may be laid down as a canon of truth in the history of literature that a Reviewer will be usually unable to perceive the merits of a very extraordinary teacher. Reviewers exist for the masses and the many, their very existence compels them to cater for the taste—and frequently a very perverted taste—of the many. The fact

that Professor Wilson and Blackwood adopted Wordsworth is no contradiction; and even those commendations were late in the poet's history, and were no doubt materially influenced not only by Wilson's love of nature and poetry—every way so much deeper, higher, and purer than Jeffreys—but by political partizanship and private friendship. The reviewing trade never forms popular taste, nor is it expected to form it. Like the newspaper and the pulpit, the review does not guide public opinion, but is itself guided by it. The review is principally valuable because it gives information to those who are disposed to obtain information through that channel. The advances Wordsworth made in public opinion are very extraordinary, when it is remembered that all the Reviews were against him; the Edinburgh, of course, in the person of Lord Jeffrey, had, to quote Wordsworth's own words, "taken a perpetual retainer, from his own incapacity to plead against his claims to public approbation;" and it never missed an occasion for striking a blow; when reviewing the writings of Professor Wilson, it selected the only passage from his writings containing a word unfavourable to Wordsworth, and exhibited it with delighted malignity. Mr. Macaulay, in reviewing the writings of Jeremy Bentham, found an opportunity of uttering a snarl over the poet of Rydal; and few great poets were commended without its being done at his expense. The Quarterly Review was not much more sympathetic, it never praised heartily, it indulged in no sneers, in no garbled quotings, but it did not understand Wordsworth; nor did it help

others to understand him, yet it was conducted by the poet's friend, admirer, and neighbour.

But even Blackwood itself was more decidedly adverse than favourable; if now and then from dear old Christopher came a warm and glowing stream of praise yet scarcely from the page of the Edinburgh Review could there be a more shallow and unfair, flippant and impertinent criticism, than the series of papers on the Theory and Writings of Wordsworth.* In all these deprecatory criticisms of course the lesser journalists joined. No instance in the history of modern literature can be more encouraging than the history of Wordsworth's Poems. How they have made their way it is very difficult to tell: they have done so—popular they are not, nor is it likely they will ever be. Is Milton popular? is Spencer? is Chaucer? Wordsworth is one of those great names posterity will take on trust. He will be as popular as either of those great masters of English poetry we have named, and like them he will be read by the lover of nature, and the readers of the golden legends of literature; the territory he will ever occupy must no more be compared with theirs than they with each other. It is no disparagement to Chaucer that we cannot compare him with Milton, nor to Spenser, that we cannot compare him with either his predecessor or successor. Admiration of Cumberland and Heidelberg, of the Cork forests, and serrated summit of the Pyrenees, and of the gentle beauty of Devonshire, does

* Vol. xxvi.—1829.

not involve the necessity of discussing the question as to which nature has done best; and as with countries so with genius, for many varying forms, admiration may be equal, although the eye rests on a course of development quite different, and the human mind is beheld working out into beauty, it is true by the operation of the same law, but the creation of a different channel. Of all poets that ever lived Wordsworth has the merit of compelling the deepest voice from the forms of the material universe.

We may now direct attention, for a page or two, to that principle which has caused so much ridicule to be associated with the name of the Poet, and which in a word may be defined to be, that, language should always be in perfect keeping with our emotions and our character. The principle laid down by our Poet is so simple, so self evident, that it seems wonderful that it should ever have provoked hostility among men of taste at all; even if some of the stanzas of our Poet be taken exception to, the principle itself is impeccable. "The principle object proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, in a state of vivid sensation." This was the theory, nor indeed was it wholly new. This is surely the principle of dramatic composition, in which character is made to speak in harmony with itself. The mistake against which Mr. Wordsworth addressed himself was false, excited, and strained utterance on the one hand, and on the other the making

our own feeling and utterance the guage and measure of those emotions which it is simply the poet's duty to describe.

The most admirable analysis of Wordsworth's diction in relation to the higher principles of art, is by the greater Coleridge, in his Biographia Literaria, and as it is the analysis of a man of all men able to fulfil the duties of a critic, so it is not by any means too partial; we should with great respect venture to differ indeed from Coleridge, in reference to certain alleged faults in the manner of Wordsworth. We believe that the Poet seldom erred in the language he placed in the mouths of peasants. The peasant he delighted to sketch, and whose conversation he delighted to listen to, was the simple church-going labourer, trained to habits of reflection by his Bible, and by the trials of life; this was the only vantage ground on which he placed him, but it was an unconscious coincidence with the well known Henry More's opinion of who said "that a man of confined education but of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible will naturally form a more winning and commanding rhetoric, than those that are learned, the intermixture of tongues and artificial phrases debasing their style."

We have seen that Wordsworth cannot be entirely exonerated from the charge of frequently degrading his versification, but mainly because he did not abide faithfully by his own principles, he sometimes forgot that he was describing excited feelings and emotions and gave to a state of vivid impression the tamest language of most

ordinary life; then again he did not really feel that "there should be an essential difference between the language of prose, and metrical composition;" that if verse is not delineative of a state of lofty feeling, of enthusiastic and ecstatic emotion, it is not poetry. Metre indeed, at once puts chains upon the spirit, and gives its impulses to soar; in itself metre, is powerless, without the spirit breathing through it, indeed it has not even music. Metre is a mere organ tube—its feet are the stops of the organ, and overwhelming emotions use it and them to shake the soul.

Coleridge, in the work we have already referred to,* has enumerated as the characteristic excellences of these poems, especially with relation to their versification, the following, which may also stand as the test and measure of any poetry:

I. "An austere purity of language, both grammatically and logically, in short a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning.

II. "A correspondent weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won not from books, but from the Poet's own meditative observation. No frequency of perusal can deprive them of their freshness, to those accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into the twilight realm of consciousness, and feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being to which they know that the attributes of time

* Biographia Literaria, vol. II. pp. 161—173.

and space are inapplicable and alien, but which yet cannot be conveyed save in symbols of time and space.

III. "The sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs; the frequent *curioso felicitas* of his diction. This beauty as eminently characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry, his rudest assailants have felt themselves compelled to acknowledge and admire.

IV. "The perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from nature, and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the physiognomic expression to all the works of nature. Like a green field reflected in a calm and perfectly transparent lake, the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and lustre. Like the moisture or the polish on a pebble genius neither distorts nor false colours its objects; but on the contrary brings out many a vein and many a tint which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the rank of gems, what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller, on the dusty high road of custom.

V. "A meditative pathos, a union of deep, subtle thought with sensibility, a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or comate, but of a contemplator from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature, no injuries of wind or weather, or even of ignorance wholly disguise the human face divine."

We shall revert again to the singular compact made between Coleridge and Wordsworth, in the selection

and treatment of subjects, in fact, to quote the popular scholastic phraseology, Wordsworth was to make the objective subjective, and Coleridge the subjective objective. Wordsworth was to perform that task so easy to him to perform, to clothe the appearances of nature—dead material natures with the vividness, and charm, and witchery of life, giving hopes and passions, desires, affections, and intelligences to the ordinary forms and aspects of nature, and to the most unlikely of human—nay of animal creatures. Coleridge on the contrary was to project all these mental phantasmagoria, and make them take shape, and body, and form, giving to them grossness or etheriality, beauty or deformity. The mind does this constantly. There is a moral influence in the aspects and influences of nature; true, a fine day and a gloomy day affect us very differently, and people and circumstances print on us their own character, but it is not the less true—nay it is more true—that we imprint our character on them, not merely our character but our mood. The same scene may be beheld we know by very different eyes, yet the outer eye may be the same, the scenery in every particular the same; Crabbe's Lover's Journey is a perplexing problem to the believers in Alison's doctrine of Taste. Thus indeed all poets vary in their paintings as they are more or less subjective; some have the faculty of looking at objects nakedly in themselves, others cannot see them for an instant without the vesture of the haze of their own minds being more or less brilliant or gloomy; and as with the poets, so with the critics; critics see in great writers what they

can see, and no more; clearness in writing, how ever it may be desired, is sometimes purchased dearly. Clearness! is it the transparency of shallowness, or of purity? It is very easy to say, because you do not understand a writer, therefore he must be inferior, weak, and worthless. That must depend on what are the topics on which he discourses to us, and our fitness to comprehend them and him. "Wastes of Moonshine" is an epithet which has often been applied to both the conversation of Coleridge, and the poetry of Wordsworth; it is certainly a very satisfactory way of getting rid of a difficulty. "We do not understand them, therefore they are inferior to us;" this is the pith and marrow of all Jeffrey's criticism on our author, and of most other such objecting criticism; and it will be found usually that such persons are unable to fathom the writer, from their constantly dwelling on the outside of things, like physicians running their mechanical routine, measuring every thing by the ticking of the pulse, and denying the existence of a life beyond mechanical phenomena.

And from a reason founded on this it has been the custom with many people to attempt some comparison between Crabbe and Wordsworth, and to this comparison Lord Jeffrey led the way in one of his reviews, in which he held up both together, exalting the genius of Crabbe, and of course depreciating that of our author. We believe few persons have derived more pleasure than we have from all the writings of the author of the Village, the Borough, and the Tales of the Hall; we shall be far therefore from a disposition to depreciate, on the

contrary, with the exception of Jeffrey, whose praise was prejudice here, these writings have never been sufficiently or duly applauded; but if we admire them it is not because we find in them any one thing that reminds us of Wordsworth; in their form they are cast entirely on the model of Pope and Johnson; to Goldsmith's exquisite poems they were no doubt intended as a corrective, how little the world of Nature appears, in these poems, men and women for the most part are alone; Crabbe avoided Nature for her own sake, as much as Wordsworth for his own sake avoided Man. In Crabbe we see human figures prominently in the painting, and Nature and all her auxiliaries to human emotion in the back ground, while in Wordsworth the eye is arrested by the bold sweep of hills, and the cloud breaking mountain chain, and man like an insect sits on a crag, or at a cottage door, to relieve the aching eye with the spectacle of humanity; the attempt to institute a comparison between the two, is as shallow and ill-judged as a comparison would be between Keats and Swift.

But writers sometimes however unlike, do aid us in comprehending each other, and therefore if the reader will, he may glance at these two together, he will then in the first place recur to our late remarks on the spontaneous and reflective character—the character that impresses its likeness on all things, till all nature partakes of its individuality, and the character that reflects back from its own mind the colours and shapes it receives from all things, this is the distinction we must draw between meditation and observation, the medita-

tive character revolves things in relation to itself—the reflective character revolves things in relation to themselves; thus it will be seen that Crabbe's paintings are plain, unadorned, and most thoroughly English—he is able to set down what he sees, and he seems rarely to be troubled with feeling, he jots down an observation, an axiom, he tells us without circumlocution what he feels, of imagination in the true use of the word there may be said to be none in his writings, he looks at things, and has a very happy power of grouping together all the parts proper to a picture, and he sheds over all the light, not uncheerful, of a pleasant, if sometimes a grim humour, approaching to satire. You cannot avoid the impression, either, in his instance that human life is more a subject of Curiosity and Interest, than of Sympathy, doubtless much of the last, but much more of the first. In the mode of his art, and his simple power of narrative, unbroken by philosophical reflection, strange as it may seem to some, he is more like Scott than any other writer.

Nothing in Wordsworth has excited more contempt than the characters he has chosen to garland with his verse. "What do we meet there?" says one critic,* "Idiot boys, mad mothers, wandering jews, (?) visitations of ague, and phrensied mariners who are fated to accost us with tales that almost make ones faculties topple over. These are his refreshing thoughts, his natural excitements, and when you have finished with these you

* Leigh Hunt.

shall have the smallest of your fugitive reflections arrested and embodied in a long lecture upon a thorn, or a duffill cloak, till thorns and duffill cloaks absolutely confound you with their importance in life, and these are his elementary feelings, his calm and counteracting simplicities." Lord Jeffrey never forgave Wordsworth for his choice of low subjects, and his investing poverty in the dignity of moral grandeur. There is a sweet passage in his life in which he says "I have no feeling for the *ideal* poverty of your Wordsworths and Coleridges, comfortable, flattered, very spoiled, capricious idle beings, fantastically discontented because they cannot make an easy tour to Italy, and buy casts and cameos; what poor, peddling, whining, drivellers, in comparison with Burns." * Of course the reader well knows that similar opinions run through the Reviews of the great northern critic; this has formed a very staple charge against the poet; all have delighted to urge it, and it has been thought to be unanswerable. It may be remarked in passing that Crabbe selected characters equally as low as Wordsworth; our objection to Wordsworth's characters would be amazingly the reverse of this, in truth it would be that he made his humanity too ideal, that he regarded man too much through the rainbow lights of poetry; he sought too much for artistic situations for his favourites, and exhibits too little sympathy with them and their actual condition. It was his nature to elevate all he touched to an ideal height;

* Life of Jeffrey, v. 2. p. 293.

it is too true that between him and the human subjects of his verse, there was a great gulf fixed—a perfect ocean rolled, and it rolled not to unite but to divide—he contemplated human beings on the other side of the ocean, he did not go over to them; he poured over them the rich sun-light of his own imperial imagination, and to him they shook with fears, or kindled with hopes, which were more appropriately his than theirs. He saw man too much in the concrete, and the mass, and although he had so fine an eye for the details of emotion and affection, and volition, his genius was on the whole much more synthetic than analytic; he saw differing faculties, no man better, but he did not see the differences in men and women, and in fact this arose from his not seeking to understand them; but putting them, their condition, their feelings, beneath the glass of his own mind, he thus in most instances deceived himself, and mistook the observation of his own volitions, for the observation of others.

It has been a mooted question among critics and other than critics how far our poet in his human characterisations was influenced by real sympathy with, and for man. Was it not the artist alone who spread the canvas, and laid on the forms and colours. He has opened to us himself much of the secret in one of his poems, where he says

> "It was the first
> Of those domestic tales that spake to me
> Of *Shepherds, dwellers in the Valleys*, men
> *Whom I already loved; not verily*

For their own sakes, but for the hills and fields
Where was their occupation and abode;
And hence this tale, while I was yet a boy,
Careless of books, yet, having felt the power
Of nature by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
On man, the heart of man, and human life." *

We may gather from this and from the general structure of his studies that his interest in human beings was principally artistic—the portraits—the paintings are beautiful. We are awed and moved by them to tears, but they rather realize to us what the sculptor can do, they seem cold in their awful purity of tone, and the life revealed is suggestive of a higher or deeper life; we cannot escape from the conviction that in the development of that character, the reflection of the poet was more powerful than his instinct.

We have already referred to the poetry of Wordsworth as embodying and illustrating the Life of the Soul. In such a connection it is impossible to pass by without notice that magnificent Ode, if not the finest, yet the most remarkable in our language, "On the Intimations of Immortality from recollections of early childhood." This poem is a presentation in English clothing of the Argument of the Phædo of Plato; not so much does

* But he says in a letter to Sir George Beaumont—"For my part strip my neighbourhood of human beings, and I should think it one of the greatest privations I could undergo. You have all the poverty of solitude—nothing of its elevation." But this is quite reconcilable with only an artistic sympathy with them.

it resolve itself into an argument for the future existence, as for the pre-existence of the human soul. Whence came we? This mighty and impassive nature, perhaps most impassive, most energetic in childhood, whence came *it?* Can material being produce immaterial life? Is not the life of childhood an everlasting problem? What keenness of thought; without a sophism the child will perplex the most acute logician, and what a strong faith is there in the mind of a child, what bounding joyousness, what heart is there, what keenness of deduction, what power of imitation, what redundancy of fancy, what exuberance of love. Coleridge has said of genius that "its highest characteristic is to carry into mature age the feelings of childhood;" can it be that the whole of our daily life is a departure from the holiness of those feelings with which we are endowed in infancy? Shall we in another state return to that life? the highest voice that has spoken in our world has pronounced a blessing on childhood, and declared that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Undoubtedly the sensibilities of children are a continual marvel

> "Their exterior semblance doth belie
> The soul's immensity."

The memory of childhood has not passed entirely from any one of us, its voices are with us still,

> "We know where'er we go
> That there hath passed away a glory from the earth."

What then is this golden age, "this bud of being, this dim dawn, this twilight of our day, this vestibule," this time when fear lies asleep with terror, this moment of the awakening of the soul in a new world, this time "when the winds come to us from the fields of sleep?" True, our memory does not frequently carry us back to another world, yet sometimes men *have* fancied such intimations fell over their being and their pillow; but we speak most of joyous forgetfulness; of the unsleeping hope of the soul shining so bright in the eye, of the merriment, and the translucent dream; of the buoyant spirit shaking its wings above the dross and the smoke of the world, of the unsuspicious repose, the careless rest; the world's social intercourse takes all these away, but who gives them? whence do they come? whence do they descend upon us? Is it a wild vague dream to seek the solution in the belief in a prior being in a world of spiritual existence? Therefore says Wordsworth,

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us our life's star
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy,
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
  Upon the growing boy,
And he beholds the light and whence it flows,
  He sees it in his joy;

The youth who daily further from the east
Must travel, still is nature's priest;
And by the vision splendid,
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

In a similar vein the poet proceeds,

"Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy
Can utterly abolish and destroy
Truths that wake to perish never.
Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Tho' inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of the immortal sea
That brought us hither,—
Can in a moment travel thither;
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty voices rolling evermore."

Finally, the noble apostrophe forming the close of the poem is worthy of a place in the memory.

"And oh ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Forbode not any severing of our loves;
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might,
I only have relinquished one delight;
To live beneath your more habitual sway:
I love the brooks which down the channels fret,
E'en more than when I tripp'd lightly as they—
The innocent brightness of the new-born day
Is lovely yet.
The clouds that gather round a setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from the eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality:
Another race hath been, and other palms are won—

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, its fears:
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

An illustration of the unfair estimate of these human delineations is to be met with in Lord Jeffrey's criticisms on the Schoolmaster MATTHEW, and they are not only unfair, but as absurd as they are unfair—the ground of quarrel is, that Wordsworth's Schoolmaster is not the same Schoolmaster as the one drawn by Crabbe, and Goldsmith!! more ludicrous still the ground of quarrel is, that Wordsworth's Schoolmaster is not the same person as Shenstone's Schoolmistress!! and truly this is the case, Matthew is Matthew, and in the whole compass of poetry there is no Schoolmaster like him; it would be quite as valid an objection against the character of Jaques, that he is not Hamlet, or against the character of Macbeth that he is not Iago. In conceiving the character of Matthew, Wordsworth's Schoolmaster, it is indispensable to remember that he is not a mere village pedagogue, but one with a heart overflowing with contemplation; a poet who takes shelter from the grief of past years, and the intense sorrow of a nature ill at ease with itself, in a world too narrow for its sympathies and its powers. These poems form a beautiful series, and shape themselves into one biography. It is an ideal Schoolmaster, but it would seem a portrait of Wordsworth's own Teacher at Esthwait. The portraits of Goldsmith and Crabbe may be met in any Village, but the portrait of Wordsworth is not the less true to

nature because an exception to the ordinary stream of character, in some particulars it resembles the beautiful portrait in the Old Curiosity Shop; it would follow from Wordsworth's peculiar idiosyncracy of mind that he could not paint, especially so attractive a character as a Village Schoolmaster, without entering into his inner life; not a mere ignorant pedagogue, but one profoundly versed in the great sympathies, although compelled to narrow the manifestation of them, living alone, but glad when in the mood to pour out all his soul, its meditative sorrow or its mirth. It seems indeed as if such Village Schoolmasters have quite gone out of existence, and it is very possible that there never were many, but as a simple unsophisticated nature, in love with his children if not with his occupation, setting the murmurs of the fountain to music, and allowing it to bear him away on its streams to the distant and far-off green spots of memory, this has never seemed to us a character worthy of the sneer of being "a fantastical and hysterical schoolmaster." * Some of the purest and most touching lessons are conveyed in connection with this character, and certainly so far as the abstract poetic conception of the person goes, he is as superior to any other schoolmaster in poetry as the circumstances in which he is found are superior to the flat level of Crabbe's scenery. Breaking away from his school and his children, to pace the mountain glen, or the banks of a neighbouring stream; not Aram like, to feed on the

* Jeffrey.

consciousness of crime, but to allow the meditative stream and current of nature, to pour on: this is a laughable character! we must feel some pity for the critic who could attempt to make it so; surely the laughter could only originate in the absence of all the sympathies which could inspire such a character.

After all it is not too much to claim for these Poems a place by themselves in our literature, of these perhaps PETER BELL is best known, and has been visited at once with the greatest amount of praise and blame. The origin of this and other similar poems is mentioned by Mr. Coleridge; and, as the passage has been seldom noticed, and is indispensable to the apprehension of several of the most important poems of both these eminent men, it may well be quoted here—"During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the interest of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the colours of imagination; the sudden charm which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts; in the one the incidents and agents were to be in part at least supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth

of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them to be real; and real, in this sense, they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion has at any time believed himself under, supernatural agency; for the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves."* Thus we have the origin of the two poems, "Peter Bell," and the "Ancient Mariner," both of them pictures of minds startled into conciousness by remorse; both poems are purely psychological studies, the "Ancient Mariner" and "Peter Bell" both present in the first chapter of their history, pictures of unawakened being, they are abortive natures; the life of the one is in an ice rift, amidst its crackling and howling, there was yet no life, "No shape of men or beasts we ken," and there was no love, thus it is the picture of a barren being in a barren world, the glimmering of the white moonshine through the drifts of the snowy glaciers, the iceberg "floating by as green as emerald," the looming wings of the good Albatross, through the white fog smoke, found no sympathy, none of these awakened an emotion in the old Mariner; the likeness of Peter Bell is more intelligible, it is another, yet the same.

"He roved among the vales and streams,
In the green wood and hollow dell;

* Biographia Literaria, vol. 2. pp. 1-2.

They were his dwellings night and day—
But nature ne'er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell.

In vain thro' every changeful year
Did Nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

In vain, thro' water, earth, and air,
The soul of happy sound was spread;
When Peter on some April morn,
Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
Made the warm earth his lazy bed.

At noon, when, by the forest's edge
He lay beneath the branches high;
The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart; he never felt
The witchery of the soft blue sky!

Though Nature could not touch his heart
By lovely forms, and silent weather,
And tender sounds, yet you might see
At once, that Peter Bell and she
Had often been together.

There was a hardness in his cheek,
There was a hardness in his eye,
As if the man had fixed his face,
In many a solitary place,
Against the wind and open sky!"

Here is a mental portrait of one seen every day, a mind so thickly encrusted with the common places and sensualities of life that no meaning is beheld in any of the phases of nature, no intelligible tone in any of her

searchings; the portrait of Peter is one for which many persons may sit; it is descriptive of that state in which most persons spend the most precious periods of their life, revolving round the "centre of indifference," to them there never was uttered "the everlasting No," still less "the everlasting Yea." Some minds are repressed by apathy—indolence—irresolution; but others are frozen up in the northern pole of existence, and all the pomp and plenitude of nature are spread around them, but create no impression on their spirits; it is a kind of negative life, "a night-mare life in death;" it is the chrysalis state of the soul, and when the mind has long continued in that state it is obvious that no ordinary event can startle it from its torpidity, and the awakening is produced by various means, sometimes the tyranny of a great overshadowing Doubt will do it; the man looks up and finds the dense and heavy volumes of black clouds settling down into night over his soul: sometimes a sense of Injustice will do it—it wakens him, he finds his freedom hazarded, the whole of his true being in jeopardy: sometimes Love, the great teacher, awakens him, a pair of bright blue or hazel eyes have revealed to many a man his capability at once for happiness and effort; an unusual sight or scene—a curious speculation or book; a friendly voice, an accident, or a suggestion, may lead a man forth into a tract of meditation or observation that shall change the current of his whole future being. Peter Bell, the most ridiculed of all Wordsworth's poems, is written to pourtray this transformation of character consequent upon a startling

thought; in both the Ancient Mariner and the poem to which we refer, the change is effected mostly by the feeling of Remorse, and the perfecting of both natures produces the happy influence of a loving out of a hateful Spirit; the testimony of the Ancient Mariner is that

> "He prayeth well who loveth well,
> Both man, and bird, and beast;
> He prayeth best who loveth best—
> All things both great and small,
> For the dear God, who loveth us,
> Both made and loveth all."

And

> "Peter now is taught to feel
> That man's heart is a holy thing;
> And nature, thro' a world of death,
> Breathes into him a second breath—
> More searching than the breath of spring."

Another psychological portrait of great interest is the YOUTH FROM GEORGIA'S SHORE in the delightful poem called "Ruth." It is a portrait of the life of Intellectual Dissipation, a sketch of a character often to be met with in the social intercourse, and that life is a career more dangerous to virtue than it is frequently regarded as being. The poet paints a young man, with whom virtue is rather a sentiment than a principle; an impulse rather than a duty; to whom the charm of virtue is like a day in the woods, or among the rocks, the accident of their being; there is deep occasion to compassionate that being to whom has been given the "hues of genius."

> "So much of earth, so much of heaven,
> And such impetuous blood."

Whose nature seems powerless in the grasp of strong passions—the terrible tides of his being; virtue commends itself to genius by its own beauty, because true genius shows its truth in the worship of the beautiful, and only the truly good is the truly beautiful; yet this love of virtue is not always virtue; in the study in the poet's text there are none of the great constituents of virtue—fortitude—denial—duty—discipline; and we are compelled with pain frequently to see how the intellectual life fritters itself away in a round of dissipations as real as any to which the most devoted sensualism ever lent itself. Nay, further, may we not say there is something of sensuality in this very intellectualization. "The beauteous forms of nature" only "feed voluptuous thought." The mind does not repose upon its own creations and volitions; only acts when magnetized by the senses. A man may live amidst a whirl of books until this is the case; in the studies of the painter and sculptor—amidst the agonies of the opera and the ballet—nay, in the serenity of nature's own world this may be the case; the Leo's and the Lorenzo's, the Byron's, and the Sheridan's, are all instances of this intellectual debauchery, the catalepsy of the moral, and their mere subserviency to Æsthetic powers. Here is the picture of unpruned wild intellect—the creature of passionate impulses. This spirit, stirred by every passing gust of fancy, charmed with the beauty of virtue, wild, adventurous, a tongue

eloquent to inspiration, in verse and tale; tinged with all the romance of the wild Indian Forest Life;

"With hues of genius on his cheek,
In finest tones the Youth could speak:
—While he was yet a boy,
The moon, the glory of the sun,
And streams that murmur as they run,
Had been his dearest joy.

He was a lovely Youth! I guess
The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he;
And when he chose to sport and play,
No dolphin ever was so gay
Upon the tropic sea.

The wind, the tempest roaring high,
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a Youth to whom was given
So much of earth—so much of heaven,
And such impetuous blood.

Whatever in those climes he found
Irregular in sight or sound
Did to his mind impart
A kindred impulse, seem'd allied
To his own powers, and justified
The workings of his heart.

Nor less, to feed voluptuous thought,
The beauteous forms of nature wrought,
Fair trees and gorgeous flowers;
The breezes their own languor lent,
The stars had feelings, which they sent
Into those favoured bowers.

Yet, in his worst pursuits, I ween
That sometimes there did intervene

Pure hopes of high intent:
For passions link'd to forms so fair
And stately, needs must have their share
Of noble sentiment.

But ill he lived, much evil saw,
With men to whom no better law
Nor better life was known;
Deliberately, and undeceived,
Those wild men's vices he received,
And gave them back his own.

His genius and his moral frame
Were thus impaired, and he became
The slave of low desires;
A man who without self-control
Would seek what the degraded soul
Unworthily admires."

We have before said that all the portraits are mental, we find the face through the description of the mind working behind the face. We remember no instance in which Wordsworth has sketched a physiognomy, the material features are in complete subjection to the spiritual, no outer dress or drapery is given to us, no height or breadth of brow, no lineaments of face, and almost the only actions are the utterances of volitions and thoughts, the characters are studies from the Poet's own heart: it frequently happens that the Hero is a character in its minuteness suggested by the analysis of his own mind and the presentation to him by consequence of what is most opposite to that mind, this is the case with the already cited illustrations of Peter Bell, and the Youth from Georgia's shore, it is frequently said that the breadth of genius is most shown in the

power to pourtray human character, with all its world of motive and passion, this is not our poet's office and mission; certainly every man who writes much will give us the transcript of his own mind. Our occasion of quarrel with some poets is that they present us with no other portrait beside their own, and this with Congreve, and Sheridan, and Byron, is a just cause for quarrel. The professed purpose of the dramatist is to pourtray human passion and emotion in their variety, and it is therefore unnatural that all the characters should "talk like wits or rave like misanthropes;" but where the object of the poet is didactic, where every character is introduced for the purpose of illustrating a single phase of human life, thought, and conduct, or giving a new aspect to natural or domestic scenery, the matter is far otherwise; Milton has given to us few human characters, though he has animated his spirits in Pandemonium with human passions; in this Wordsworth resembles him, only all his characters are truly human, and all sketched from humble life. But altho' we find little dramatic action and passion, some of the smaller poems especially, which have been held up so frequently to contempt, are beautiful and appropriate dramas in themselves. True, *he leaves much to the suggestions of his readers*, this is the key-stone of the arch bridging over the mind of the poet to the mind of his auditor,

> "Oh, reader, had you in your mind—
> Such stores as silent thought can bring;
> Oh, gentle reader, you would find
> A tale in every thing."

But we shall find our affections and sympathies as strongly enlisted for the unpretending heroes of Wordsworth's verse, as for any of the more famed heroes or heroines of dramatic literature. We have already referred to MATTHEW the village schoolmaster with "hair of glittering grey:" blythe, happy old man, with whom

> "We talk'd with open heart and tongue,
> Affectionate and true;
> A pair of friends, though I was young,
> And Matthew seventy-two."

And who cannot figure the spreading oak, the mossy seat, the fountain breaking from the turf, the old "grey haired man of glee," the dear old man with his mournful but philosophic discourse, rendered to the poet instead of a song, that dirge-like strain, called forth by the murmuring of the fountain.

> "No check, no stay, this streamlet fears,
> How merrily it goes!
> 'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
> And flow as now it flows.
>
> My eyes are dim with childish tears,
> My heart is idly stirred;
> For the same sound is in my ears
> Which in those days I heard.

And then follows that most impressive verse,

> "Thus fares it still in our decay:
> And yet the wiser mind
> Mourns less for what age takes away,
> Than what it leaves behind.

My days, my Friend, are almost gone,
My life has been approved,
And many love me; but by none
Am I enough beloved."

The portrait of Matthew is complete, like all Wordsworth's, it is a separate individual painting, and every reader may say with his biographer,

"Matthew is in his grave, yet now,
Methinks, I see him stand;
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand."

It was while standing by the grave of ROB ROY that the impersonation of the democratic element and character was conceived by the Poet. The prince of modern robbers is placed in happy and true comparison with the great warrior reformers and captains of revolutions; the foundation trait of the wild leader of the savage clan is identified with every restless spirit of every age; the discontent resulting from looking at things as they are, and comparing them with their essence and intention; the struggling of the mind self-taught, self-reliant, won by its own teachings, and monitions, and observations, to spurn the world of books, and to reason out a condition of society for itself; indulging in generous but wild conceptions, yet baptised to the most hearty selfism; boldly daring the task of reconstructing society, and preaching the gospel of might as the only rule of right, as the great lesson of God's appointment;

"Of old things, all are over old,
Of good things, none are good enough;
We'll show that we can help to frame
A world of other stuff.

I too will have my Kings that take
From me the sign of life and death;
Kingdoms shall shift about, like clouds,
Obedient to my breath."

The thirst for power—the consciousness of it, is no longer the event of an age; it is now the one thought of myriads of minds; the mind of humanity everywhere is reverting to the great primary distinctions of our being, so plain and so few, not less now, but in a more eminent sense than ever it may be said—

"All freakishness of mind is checked;
He tamed, who foolishly aspires;
While to the measure of his might—
Each fashions his desires."

Men are intolerant of books as exponents of rights, and laws.

"*Thee* find I graven on my *heart*,
That tells *me* what to do."

Every political convulsion, religious schism, wide spreading revolution, all are the evidences of the Rob Roy feeling; the democratic state, the diffusion over society of the idea of power, of mind making comparisons between the realities and mockeries of things, grasping the baton to strike down the wrong and the wrong-doer, and to make the might so long, the servant of wrong, the servant of right.

Among the poems dedicated to Society and Politics there has not seemed to us any one more remarkable than this; that poem contains the essence of most of Mr. Carlyle's eloquent panegyrics on Right and Might, but certainly with the recognition of a moral element we often look for in vain, in the teachings of that great writer. Standing by the grave of the great Scotch Freebooter, our poet swept away all the encumbering conventionalities of his age, and read in his life the meaning of Democracy; for the time Rob Roy was to him Robin Hood, or Cromwell, or Napoleon—a strong man rending asunder the laws like withs of tow, making his own social state, and compelling inferior natures to yield to him unquestioning obedience. It is a fine picture of man taking, and judging man as he is, the will of the strongest rising high and supreme in a complex and disordered state of society. The man dissatisfied with this, dissatisfied with the petty tyranny of law and lawyers, seeks law not in the books of lawyers, in the statutes and shelves of the attorney, but "in the principles of things." It is easy to trace the course of the poet's feeling, and the latent, half-concealed dissatisfaction with all things about him; when that poem was thought, we can conceive it to be the result of that critical era of the poet's mind when he was lapsing from his Republican feelings to the more Conservative creed of his after life. And very doubtful does it seem what may be the after convictions of his mind; is it an apology for Democracy, or for Despotism? The reader will be in some difficulty in solving this question, for there is

perhaps not so much, or so wide a difference between the two as many suppose; every hearty Democrat is a Despot; his will is with him supreme, and therefore these lines so full of sententious wisdom might have been written as truly, or more truly, by the grave of Cromwell (had Cromwell a grave) as by the tomb of Rob Roy. This piece is probably an illustration how often we are to take the verses of Poets as Studies, not as the principles they are prepared always to defend; we feel certain that Mr. Wordsworth would not have defended the main position of this poem, namely, that the Might makes the Right.

But the principal human character in Wordsworth's Poems, that which has received at once heaviest condemnation and heartiest sympathy is the PEDLAR in the Excursion. The Pedlar Philosopher has met with much scorn from the critics; perhaps a little reflection, a little sympathy with nature, would elevate the character to one of the noblest and highest places in poetry, the poet indeed said "at the risk of giving a shock to the prejudices of artificial society I have ever been ready to pay homage to the aristocracy of nature, under a conviction that vigorous human heartedness is the constituent principle of true taste;" and then he quotes a passage from Heron's Journey in Scotland, illustrative of the character of the ancient race of men called Pedlars. "It may be further observed, for the credit of this useful class of men, that they commonly contribute, by their personal manners, no less than by the sale of their wares, to the refinement of the people among

whom they travel; their dealings form them to great quickness of wit and acuteness of judgment; having constant occasion to recommend themselves and their goods, they acquire habits of the most obliging attention and insinuating address. As in their peregrinations they have opportunity of contemplating the manners of various men and various cities, they become eminently skilled in the knowledge of the world. As they wander each alone through thinly-inhabited districts, they form habits of reflection and sublime contemplation; with all these qualifications, no wonder that they should often be in remote parts of the country —the best mirrors of fashion and censors of manners— and should contribute much to polish the roughness, and soften the rusticity of our peasantry. It is not more than twenty or thirty years since (now probably about eighty.) A young man going from any part of Scotland to England on purpose to carry the pack was considered as going to lead the life and acquire the fortune of a gentleman; when, after twenty years absence in that honorable line of employment, he returned with his acquisitions to his native country, he *was* regarded as a gentleman to all intents and purposes." This is the foundation outline of one of Wordsworth's most sustained characters, the poetical personage reprobated in good round terms by Lord Jeffrey, and loved and lauded by Christopher North, who has quoted a most eloquent passage from the Ornithologist Wilson's Autobiography, he, after being a weaver at Paisley, followed the occupation of a Pedlar. Sandy says—"I

have this day, I believe, measured the height of an hundred stairs, and explored the recesses of twice that number of miserable habitations; and what have I gained by it? only two shillings of worldly pelf, but an invaluable treasure of observation. In this elegant dome, wrapt up in glittering silks, and stretched on the downy sofa, recline the fair daughters of wealth and indolence; the ample mirror; flowery floor, and magnificent couch, their surrounding attendants; while suspended in his wiry habitation above, the shrill-piped canary warbles to enchanting echoes. Within the confines of that sickly hovel, hung round with squadrons of his brother artists, the pale faced weaver plies the resounding lay, or launches the melancholy murmuring shuttle. Lifting this simple latch, and stooping for entrance to the miserable hut, there sits poverty and ever moaning disease, clothed in dunghill rags, and ever shivering over the fireless chimney. Ascending this stair, the voice of joy bursts on the ear; the bridegroom and the bride surrounded by their jocund companions, circle the sparkling glass and the humourous joke, or join in the raptures of the noisy dance; the squeaking fiddle breaking through the general uproar in sudden intervals, while the sounding floor groans beneath its unruly load. Leaving these happy mortals, and ushering into this silent mansion a more solemn, a more striking object presents itself to my view. The windows, the furniture, and every thing that could lend one cheerful thought are hung in solemn white; and there stretched pale and lifeless lies the awful corpse,

while a few weeping friends sit black and solitary, near the breathless clay. In this other place, the fearless sons of Bacchus extend their brazen throats in shouts like bursting thunder, to the praise of their gorgeous chief. Opening this door, the lonely matron explores for consolation, her Bible; and in this house the wife brawls, the children shriek, the husband bids me depart lest its termagant's fury should vent itself on me. In short, such an inconceivable variety daily occurs to my observation in real life, that would, were they moralised upon, convey more maxims of wisdom, and give a juster knowledge of mankind, than whole volumes of Lives and Adventures, that perhaps never had a being except in the prolific brains of their fantastic Authors."*

This is a portrait in prose poetry, of Wordsworth's Pedlar and moral philosopher; it is a noble chapter in the life of the soul, and such is all his verse, the life of the soul; as far as possible with purposes so serious, the whole soul; the soul of the child with its little hopes and joys, and sorrows; its first sweet remembrances and bereavements; its unaffected moods and desires; the soul of Woman with its boundless affection, its exhaustless love; not the woman of the libertine and tyrant; not the woman of fashion and of form; the soul of the woman of nature, with her natural tears; the soul of Margaret in all its profundity of sorrow; of Lucy, "that violet by a mossy stone;" of Louisa, the lover of the highlands, the waterfalls, and the flowers, shew-

* Recreations of Christopher North, vol. II. p. 21.

ing us "how divine a thing a woman may be made;" of woman the help mate for man,

> "The noble being wisely plann'd
> To warn, to comfort, to command;
> The being breathing thoughtful breath,
> The traveller betwixt life and death;
> And yet a spirit still and bright,
> With something of an angel light."

It is the soul of woman, in which all the affections are subservient to the highest moral and social purposes. There are not in these pages many heroines, but they are all beautiful to the painter and the moralist; and the inspiration revolves round woman, the sister, the wife, the matron, the mother; the verses are all surcharged with a true brotherly affection for the whole of the sex, and when they descend to the deep individuality of feeling, we admire that love still, for the truly lovely, that hallowed fancy which conjures indeed the woman to its eye, but the woman robed in all the drapery of domestic virtue, crowned with all the self-satisfying bliss of social life, and surrounded with children, and all the endearments of home. This Poetry is the life of the soul; of the soul of man—of the poor man—of the old Cumberland Beggar, "living in the eye of nature," of the forlorn Leech gatherer of the Moor, teaching the great lessons of Resolution and Independence; of Simon Lee, the weak handed Woodman; grateful Simon Lee, on whom the bard soliloquises,

"I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning:
Alas! the gratitude of men
Has oftener left me mourning."

It is the life of the fainting sceptic quivering in the webs of his own sophistic nature; of the soul of the heroic and the strong hearted man, mighty in his faith, doing battle with doubt; kindling into rapture beneath the inspiring ideas of Providence and Universal Love; of aged Michael, bravely setting his chest against the storms and difficulties of life; it is the life of the soul racked by "guilt and sorrow," or consumed by wasting woe. When before has the mental biography of our race been written with such natural truthfulness; and the verses overflow with exuberant affection, intense passion and tenderness, tearful and most affecting; there is no straining after effect, no cunning contrivance of the most chivalrous and sounding words; no novel and unnatural incident to awaken feeling, the first emotion is surprise at the evident tenderness of the poet, his soul seems to have sounded all the depths of human sensibility, those quiet causes and contrasts which always lie unnoticed and unknown, except in the greatest poets, and frequently in them are all brought obviously into play. As you read you seem to be looking at objects reflected in a lake; you are reading rather the poet's soul than the soul of the character described; it is a tenderness excited by contact with nature, the noise and jar of cities have little to do here; the poet has unfitted himself for any dealing with the boisterous passions of

stormy men, he has always around him the images of exceeding love and beauty,

> "Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

From this spirit it is that we are taught

> "Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
> With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

The same tenderness teaches us to

> "Know that pride
> Howe'er disguised in its own majesty
> Is littleness; that he who feels contempt
> For any living thing, hath faculties
> Which he has never used, that thought with him
> Is in its infancy."

True the pomp of stormy terror, the wild agony of super-human suffering; the delirium of sorrow, the first electric shock of mental pain, the woe that finds no lenitive; these have not been described, or but rarely, though in one or two instances with remarkable power; all the characters move beneath the influence of some chastening, subduing, and elevating presences; they present the aspect of sorrow, but it is the face of sorrow lightened by the beauty from the glory of the angel; it is humanity shrinking from the caverns of despair, and seeking shelter beneath the wing of the Father and the God. We have already adverted to the charge

most frequently brought against Wordsworth's human characters—their lowness and vulgarity. Another is, that there is a likeness, a similitude among them; the fact is, they are all like one another as human beings are, as he once said to the writer of these pages when conversing on the scenery of the lakes and the mountains of Westmoreland, "there is a brotherly resemblance and a brotherly difference;" the charge is not more just than it would be to prefer as a charge against the actors in Milton's Pandemonium that they are all spirits; the true meaning of this objection perhaps is, that they are all characters sketched from humble life; these are not the forms of coroneted Lords, or gartered Princes, these poems are "the short and simple annals of the poor," and let it be remembered he wrote the chronicle in compliance with no conventional language, in the day when the Lyrical Ballads, and Peter Bell, and the Excursion were published, caste and class obtained more in English Society than now they do. Wordsworth is the first of the classical Poets who has invested the every day life of poverty with a dignity truly winning, and regal, true "he makes his Pedlars Philosophers," exclaimed pedantic criticism, but let the labouring classes feel how high nor undeserved is the homage paid to them, how their friend has shown, that the labours of poverty are compatible with the worthiest results of the intellectual life, nay that the better life within us is aided by the life of physical labour and exertion; and while he has drawn the sympathies of the educated to the lowly walks of humble life, he has shown how much of worth

and intelligence is there. The lines which he wrote in the album of a child, uniting the loftiest philosophy to the most touching sweetness, might form a not inappropriate introduction to the study of all his human characters.

> "Small service is true service while it lasts,
> Of friends, however humble, scorn not one;
> The daisy—by the shadow that it casts—
> Protects a lingering dew-drop from the sun." *

* The remarks of Mr. Ruskin may not be inappropriately quoted, although the time has gone by when Wordsworth needed them as a defence.—"There is," he says, "indeed perhaps, no greater sign of innate, and *real* vulgarity of mind or defective education than the want of power to understand the universality of the ideal truth; the absence of sympathy, with the colossal grasp of those intellects, which have in them so much of divine, that nothing is small to them, and nothing large, but with equal and undefended vision they take in the sum of the world, Straw-street, and the seventh heavens, in the same instant. A certain portion of this divine spirit is visible even in the lower examples of all the true men; it is indeed perhaps the clearest test of their belonging to the true and great group, that they are continually touching what to the multitude appear vulgarities. The higher a man stands the more the word "vulgar" becomes unintelligible to him. Vulgar! What that poor farmer's girl of William Hunt's, bred at the stable, putting on her Sunday gown, and pinning her best cap, out of the green and red pincushion? Not so; she may be straight on the road to those high heavens, and may shine hereafter as one of the stars in the firmament for ever. Nay, even that lady in the satin boddice, with her arm laid over a balustrade to show it, and her eyes turned up to heaven to show them; and the sportsman waving his rifle for the terror of beasts, and displaying his perfect dress for the benefit of men, are kept by the very misery and vanity of them in the thoughts of a great painter, at a sorrowful level somewhat above vulgarity. It is only when the minor painter takes them on his easel that they become things for the universe

Availing ourselves of an apology, which no less an authority than Archbishop Whately has urged for a like misdemeanour, we may be permitted to quote a paragraph from one of our own works now long out of print, pertinent to this very occasion and tone of thought.

"We by no means imply, that the fields and the "villages are less favourable to moral discipline and "education than the city; for ourselves, we like the "village best for the training school: in the whirl of "the city the great problem of existence seems always "farthest from solution;—there, all reminds us of "man—we are most impressed by *his* power and *his* "wonderful workings. But, retire from the city to the "lonely quiet of the mountain hamlet, to the village in "the field, or the forest, to the village church-yard, "where lie the countless generations of the dead, and "the thought stirs within us, that even those graves we "see are few compared with the graves unseen, and in "their turn,—buried. When night, and the immensity "of the heavens is spread over our head, and the solemn "stars, each a world, or the centre of worlds, move on, "silent and vast, how the impression of insignificance "weighs upon us; then the question is asked, 'What

to be ashamed of. We may dismiss this matter of vulgarity in plain and few words, at least as far as regards art. There is never vulgarity in a whole truth, however common place. It may be unimportant or painful,—it cannot be vulgar, vulgarity is only in concealment of truth or in affectation."

RUSKIN'S MODERN PAINTERS, vol. III. pp. 86, 87.

"am I?' A little speck in a world, that world itself a "speck in the great universe of being. Questions like "these come more frequently to the mind amidst such "scenes, than amidst the business and turmoil of the "crowded street. To many, we are quite aware, the "lives of the hamlet, the village, the pedlar, or the "peasant, seem to be only suggestive of low thoughts, "or of exceeding monotony; but it is only the coldness "of our own nature, and the apathy of our own spirits, "that prevent us from reading everywhere the one "human tale of sorrow and of joy. What mean "we by this quest after novelty, this perpetual thirst "after the marvellous? Is not the life of every one of "us a romance? And truly has Thomas Carlyle said, "'there is the third scene of a comedy in every "marriage, and the fifth act of a tragedy in every death-"bed.' The life of every one of us is full of incident—"every tombstone is a drama. Go to the lowest roof in "the land, take the most unimaginative history, the "most quiet and retired existence of all, and you shall "find there is not one so humble as to be the unforgotten "of tears, and hopes. The humblest stream, nay, the "mud pool before thy door, hath its own wave and its "alternation of light and shade. Man's life is generally "passed in turbid hurry, and hence his sympathies are "for the most part with action manifest and visible. "But Action is relative, and comparative; there is action "and vegetation beneath the mould; the processes of "Nature are always active; her atmospheric changes, "her electrical action, are generally unseen, but change

"is *there*. There is action as deep and permanent, and to "thoughtful minds as visible in the woodland stream as in "the ocean. What a wonderful Action in the sprouting "leaf, in the disintegrating rock, in the approaching "and invading sea; the retinue of wintry leaden-coloured "clouds, to observant minds, have as much of action, "and are fraught with consequences as surely as when "the heavens are sheeted with electric flame. And the "world of Spirit is not less real in its action; the Mind "throws itself back to the times of the crusade and the "tourney, the coronation, the conquest, the knightly "deed and martial triumph, the tramp of armed feet and "the flash of swords, plot and counterplot, successful "fraud, shrinking innocence, acknowledged virtue—this "is action. Alas! is there no other world of action than "that which is revealed to us in the pages of Froissart "and Monstrelet? Tread through the ruined cloisters "of Furness, or Fountains, or Tintern—what a quiet "world! Here we say men retired from the strife, the "passion, the whirl of the Maelstrom of life; hither the "sounds of ambition and trade never penetrated. Alas, "we know little of human nature if we say so! Among "those Cloisters, within these sacred enclosures, the pas-"sion and the pomp reigned violently as in the nearest "neighbourhood to the throne, what day the brother "Hugh was elevated to the abbacy, or brother Hubert to "the cellarer; Memory made her chronicles then as "now; there was the bustle of preparation when the "expected knight, or baron, or prince, honoured the pile "with his presence, when the charter was reconfirmed of

"certain lands long of doubtful ownership; when the
"Lord Abbot returned from his visit to the parliament
"of the nation. Monotony! What a word of mere rela-
"tion is that? The life of Joscelin, the monk, was not
"a monotonous life among the shades of St. Edmunds-
"bury; and that of Charles IX. of France must have been
"monotonous amidst all the gaiety of his rich palaces.
"No life is monotonous spent in the round of sacred
"or human duties. Thus, then, if we will but see it,
"self-knowledge—self-observation, is the source of all
"observation and knowledge. The man whose life is a
"monotony, is the man who is not of sufficient interest
"to himself. The surest means of unlocking another
"man's life is to be profoundly acquainted with our own.
"For when we turn the eye inward what a world of
"latent motive and hidden design is there; what re-
"solves, what broken vows, what dreams, what hopes,
"what disappointments. And in this, and these all our
"race call us, brother!—sister! This and these con-
"secrate all habitations; in every one has been heard,
"'the still sad music of humanity.' Why do we seek
"old feudal structures to shudder at the tale of fear?
"Why hie away to the ivy-clad cloister and cell to shiver
"at the presence walking by our side? Why seek the
"old Elizabethan chamber to listen to the echoing
"laughter? What do we mean by Haunted Rooms?
"Every room is Haunted; the consecrating charm of
"humanity is all around us; songs have arisen, tears
"have fallen by every fireside; the maiden hath been
"disappointed; the youth hath been faithless; the man

"treacherous; the heart hath throbbed with agony; the "eye hath glared in horror and in wonder. That Ruined "House, whose bricks are even now being torn down, "what battlemented turret, or tented field, or monastic "seclusion, can show more than it? They caroused "while they built it;—in that chamber the old man felt "the death spasm; down those stairs they bore the "coffin; in that room the young mother felt the pains "of travail; there, the young child first opened its eyes "to the light;—they muffled that knocker for the sick "and the dying; they set out that room and sung "for the wedding; that knocker, too, the postman lifted, "and through that door he handed the black-sealed "letter; through that window the rushlight flickered; "in that room stood the bed by which the mother sat "to watch the countenance of her fevered child. Aye, "these bricks, this mortar, have something venerable "and momentive about them; they gave back the ruddy "blaze of the bright firelight on many a winter night, "when the shrill hail shrieked against the window in "the white gloom, when the snow was on the wild moor, "and the wind whistled through the skeleton forest and "over the bleak hill. Now, what have tapestried cham-"bers and high marble rooms to show more than this? "Yet we talk of 'common things,' as if the best emo-"tions were not the most common, and we talk of com-"mon life, as if that were not the richest poetry which "comes nearest to the universal sympathy, the heart, "the home, the thought of every one of us! To the "poet every habitation is sacred, and every person and

"every spot. Humanity is the topic of most universal "interest, and nature most beautiful when unlocking to "us the destiny of humanity.

"Thus then with the belief that every man is, as "Novalis has said, 'a Shekinah,' a temple for God to "dwell in, it is impossible that we can speak disrespect-"fully of man; we have in some sort learnt to pity all "men, to venerate, to love all men; we judge of systems "and speak of systems, places, governments, things, just "as they seem to us to tend to the realization or de-"pression of this idea of the human race. God's world "seems to be beautifully adapted for awakening all the "higher sensibilities and powers within us; but the "arrangements of man in that beautiful world have im-"paired the order and prevented the development; and "it is remarkable that this is most observable in that "employment which we should suppose most likely to "call into exercise the higher meditative faculties."

And again, and finally, in influencing our ideas of the Dramatic Propriety of Wordsworth's characters.

"It must be remembered, that Scenery materially "influences Character; had this circumstance been suf-"ficiently regarded by all the shallow critics of Words-"worth, the lofty sentiment and noble bearing of his "Pedlar in the Excursion, so far from seeming unnatural "would have appeared most harmonious with the pro-"bable education of one in some degree removed from "the lowest class of all, in those districts. Who is not "prepared to feel that stern and mighty Mountains have "a more than insensible influence over the spirit and

"the life; their various shifting Clouds so gorgeous or so "suggestive in all their varied hues, the sounds of the "roaring waterfalls, answering to each other from the "hills; Night, too, among the mountains comes down "with circumstances of peculiar power, there is some-"thing awful in the impressive loneliness of the farm "so far removed from cities' sound, or minster clock; in "the neighbourhood of the mountain, and beneath its "shadow have generally been born those great thoughts "which stir nations by their power. Freedom has the "affinity of natural relationship for the hills, the "most daring, but to unchristianised minds the most "natural, suggestions of deity descended from those "peaks, which to the Persians were altars. Among the "mountains all nature's lessons are on a stupendous "scale; the voices that whisper along the pines and "through the clefts of the far hill tops, the veiling or "the unveiling of the mountains by the deep mists, all "these are sources of profound reflection. The ties of "humanity, too, are all the more strong for the distance "of neighbourhood. There is a charm and tenderness "in song among the mountains which the dwellers in "cities can never appreciate; to the dweller on the dis-"tant moor or the quiet valley, it is well known the hea-"vens are decked with a richer pomp, the myriads of "the skies shine out in greater numbers. All our natures "are more sensitive than we suppose. We have often "remarked, that those who are cut off from one sense, "say of sight or hearing, find a compensating intensity "in some remaining sense: and those who are cut off

"from intimate communion with cities are quickened in "all their communications with external nature; their "memories are more gifted; their books are the glens "and fields around their home—legends are there of "hapless maid or disappointed youth—of knightly feat "performed in ages long since, nay of spiritual visitants; "the ground all round them is haunted by various me-"mories, each ruined hut or broken shieling, they knew "the owner, the possessor; and although they have not "much of book science, and perhaps know little of na-"ture's first laws, yet they have observed nature much, "they know her prognostications well—the varying "clouds and flying shadows over the crag and cliff, sunsets "and sunrisings to them have an intensity and meaning "we cannot know—the trembling of a leaf, the faint "ripple of the waters of the lake, are notes of warning "to them; nor do they fail to read their morrow's work "in the light of rainbows and of moons. How can it "be otherwise than that such persons have a seriousness "of port and of discourse unknown to the city; books "they may have read but few, but books are only valu-"able for their suggestions. The lives of such men must "be, for the most part, in their ideas, and this is the "divine life, indeed the only life—a life in some degree "informed from school knowledge, but principally in-"formed and intensified by the perpetually present "influences of the august and solemn scenery of nature. "The dalesmen of Westmoreland and Cumberland merit "the admiring study of every Englishman—there is "found 'a perfect republic of shepherds and agricultu-

"rists.'* The present owner, in many instances, feels, "as he walks over his farm, that he tills the same "ground tilled by his forefathers for the last five hun-"dred years. True, modern innovations have to a great "extent interfered here also with the large share of in-"dependence and quiet happiness anciently felt and en-"joyed, still the average intelligence of Cumberland, "and proportion of education, seems to be higher than "in any part of England; and the most precious memo-"rials of simple manners, independence and devotion, "are still to be found in those glorious countries,—in "many places, where

> 'Low and still the hamlets lie
> Beneath the little patch of sky,
> And little lot of stars.'

In our review then of the Dramatis Personæ of these Poems, we may as well say at once that there is no great variety—they are all more or less children of one father, they all belong to the same race, men and women too—they are all Wordsworth's; if this is thought a very grievous fault, we cannot help it in Wordsworth any more than we can help it in Plato, who also had a trick of making all his characters to talk in much the same style. There is very little dramatic power in Milton: such men *describe* emotions, and passions. As they are not dramatists, we do not expect them to allow emotions and passions to describe

* See Mr. Wordsworth's Eloquent Description of Lake Scenery, pp. 136-139.

themselves; the spirit of contemplation broods and hovers over all the portraits; exterior dress, feature, and physiognomy are not much attended to, although these are sometimes introduced, but usually to set off a mental history; the machinery of the stories is usually very meagre; you are rarely interested in the course of a tale, and yet you are interested in the development of the characters. The poet is careful to lead you on through the scenery which affects the mind life of his heroes and heroines, and having done this he throws back gradually fold after fold of the drapery, until he reveals the heart, with all the objects he had previously presented to you mirrored on it; and then he puts the passions into action and force, in a single instance or incident, but it is the revelation of a life, and it is not too much to say, that in Wordsworth's Poems might be found subjects of a hundred dramas.

It is in harmony with the views we have presented of these poems that there is an entire absence of all exaggeration of human action—in other words, there is neither hero, nor heroism, nor hero worship. It seems as if it were impossible that Wordsworth should ever write an Epic Poem. Man is never beheld rising in his pages till the proportions of moral magnanimity throw mountain and forest altogether into the back ground. We cannot conceive him as painting that attitude of tragic grandeur in which the human spirit sometimes standing, eclipses all other objects in the impression of the vast sorrows of suffering humanity, when wail, or sob, the solitary shriek or tear, rend the

heavens and echo to the centre of eternity. We do not meet with lengthened streams of eulogy on human achievement, the homage speaks in a solitary flash of praise, and so ends; he delighted more to swing the incense bowl around an abstraction, an idealization of some lofty moral sentiment, rather than to crown the impersonation of it with the laurels of poetry. He found the principles of Heroism in all lowly natures, and he aimed rather to exalt these than to follow the course of the strong and tall spirit in its pathway thro' society, while all were bowing before it.

Before leaving the Artist we must notice Wordsworth in relation to the Sonnets. We have many beautiful and noble poems of this order, and perhaps two or three as fine as anything in our Poet, but here it is not only the number that amazes us, but the high and sterling quality of them. Nothing so assures us of the rigid and inflexible style of the Poet, nothing so confirms our impression of his profound thought and perpetual sensibility; most of these sonnets are strongly focal, they concentrate light, utterance, and emotion; in their effect they are Panoptical, the light shoots and flows to and fro like the rich pure water of a diamond. Among many readers there is a prejudice against the Sonnet, we scarcely know why, but we know that such a prejudice does exist. Many persons accustom themselves to a certain jingle in poetry, and whatever is not true to their previous impressions, seems unnatural. We have even heard some object to "Locksly Hall," and to the "In Memoriam," and evidently from no better reason

than this. Who does not know how much poetry addresses itself to the ear; to some persons indeed it never descends beneath the ear, and hence the whole of Wordsworth's poetry that may be found against the Sonnet. The poetry that arrests the ear first will be frequently found to die before it reaches the soul, while the poetry that reaches the soul first, shoots up in waves of sound, and impresses the ear in virtue of a deeper and more potent sense. Few persons will relish the Sonnets* of Wordsworth who are not prepared for, and who do not indeed demand the higher attributes of poetry, the power namely to arrest the thought, to command and to compel by soft yet irresistible insinuation the emotions, to stir the imagination by pictures of vivid and soul-awakening majesty, and sometimes at the call of commanding voices to hurry the passions along, as upon a flaming chariot impelled by horses of fire, all these are found in these admirable Sonnets; the last perhaps not so frequently, but still even the power exists and cannot fail to be felt by those who do not give the reins to their passions, and expect them to fly urgently forward, but who make them to wait upon the strong curb of an imperial and disciplined will.

We should like to attempt some classification of these productions, and yet we are at a loss how to do it. Mr. Taylor† has divided them into Doctrinal, Descriptive,

* See a very able paper on the Sonnets of Wordsworth, in "Notes from Books," reprinted from the Quarterly Review.

† Notes from Books. "Essays on Wordsworth's Sonnets," by HENRY TAYLOR, author of *Philip van Artevelde*.

and Occasional, but it will be very evident that this does not justice to them. True there are the Doctrinal, but from this order we should be disposed to separate the Personal and the Social, and these again from the Political; and then we have the Historical and the Descriptive. It is very true that many of the Sonnets are not worthy of the Poet, and some contain perhaps only a line of remarkable strength and power, and many are unequal; but tried by Milton's standard of poetry, which is especially the test of the Sonnet, that it should be "Simple, Sensuous and Passionate," many of these will be found to occupy a very high place. We might cite many as illustrations uniting in a most remarkable manner this threefold condition. The Sonnets frequently remind us of Coleridge's definition of poetry, "good prose is proper words, in their proper places; good verse the *most* proper words in their proper places." These Sonnets sprang up wherever our Poet went; he had no occasion to look within him for subjects; to every form of being he assigned some meaning, and it is very useful as a mental discipline to notice the body and shape his thoughts wear, so clear and distinct, he "never intended to write so that those who ran might read," and especially every Sonnet is a study.

Shakspeare and Milton both wrote Sonnets, unquestionably lasting as the language in which they are enshrined, and which their enshrinement ennobles; but in this order of writing Wordsworth seems the master and the lord; the Sonnets of Shakspeare flow in great and usual beauty, but beauty is their characteristic;

they are wanting in force and terseness, in that inflamed majesty and strength of diction to which Milton indeed rose, but in which Wordsworth has left even Milton behind. No poet beside ever seems to have felt the freedom of the Sonnet; but he testifies

> "In truth the prison unto which we doom
> Ourselves no prison is: and hence to me
> In sundry moods 'twas pastime to be bound
> Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground,
> *Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)*
> *Who have felt the weight of too much liberty*
> Should find brief solace there as I have found."

Again he says,

> "Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned
> Mindless of its just honours; with this key
> Shakspeare unlocked his heart:—
> A glow-worm lamp,
> It cheered mild Spenser, called from faery-land
> To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp
> Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
> The thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
> Soul animating strains—alas, too few!"

Loving the Sonnet thus, it is not wonderful that we find him especially disposed to write his mental history in it; some of the richest and most inspired and inspiring passages are conveyed through this medium, indeed thus the Poet seems to have delighted to express his own personal faith and feeling;—thus he unfolded his tenderest emotions to the River Duddon;—thus in magnificent series he pourtrayed the growth and progress

of the religious life of the Christian ages, from their earliest day, in his Ecclesiastical Sonnets;—thus he recorded some of the most pleasant personal impressions of his journeyings;—thus, during the storm of European revolution he poured forth his scorn and execrations on Buonaparte, and thus he chaunted the high praises of Liberty, and invoked Humanity to her rescue from the sword of military despotism. For all purposes to him, the Sonnet, most distant evidently from the thoughts of most writers, seemed the readiest instrument to convey or to shrine an inspiration, to teach, to impress, or to describe.

Amongst the most important of the sonnets, (or indeed of the secondary works of the Poet) we rate those sacred to Liberty, to National Independence, and to general Political Truth. It is remarkable to notice how earnestly in these compositions his sympathy is shown with the whole affairs of Europe; how his eye watches every movement of Napoleon, at first in partial sympathy, soon with intrepid defiance, and shortly in most prophetic tones prophecying his ruin and downfall, altho' then in the full strength of his power. Let the reader's eye glance along these illustrious and dignified expressions of political truth and wisdom.

"I grieved for Buonaparté, with a vain
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood
Of that man's mind—what can it be? What food
Fed his first hopes? What knowledge could he gain?
'Tis not in battles that from youth we train
The governor who must be wise and good,

And temper with the sternness of the brain
Thoughts motherly and meek as womanhood.
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees,
Books, leisure, perfect freedom and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees
By which true sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True power doth grow on, and her rights are these."

The following is a strange chaunt for one who did not cling to popular notions of freedom:

"Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour
England hath need of thee; she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh raise us up, return to us again;
And give us freedom, manners, virtue, power;
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart,
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free;
So didst thou travel on life's common way;
In cheerful godliness, and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

He especially delighted however in the Sonnet to record some of his Individual Impressions—his more secret, sacred, and personal emotions; hence we have not only those which contain the strong and passionate blasts of language which this form of writing is so admirably fitted to convey, but those more tender, æolian airs which flow along the charmed words. Turning from the Sonnets on "King's College Chapel Cambridge," or

"Toussaint L'Overture," and many of those called forth by the struggles for national independence on the Continent, let the reader now look on the series following, called PERSONAL TALK.

I.

"I am not one who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk;—
Of friends, who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbours daily—weekly—in my sight:
And for my chance acquaintance, ladies bright,
Sons, mothers, maidens, withering on the stalk;
These all wear out for me, like forms, with chalk
Painted on rich men's floors, for one feast night.
Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire;
To sit without emotion, hope or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage fire—
To listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

II.

'Yet life,' you say, 'is life: we have seen and see,
And with a living pleasure we describe;
And fits of sprightly malice do but bribe
The languid mind into activity.
Sound sense, and love itself, and mirth and glee,
Are fostered by the comment and the gibe.'
Even be it so: yet still among your tribe—
Our daily-world's true worldlings, rank not me!
Children are blest and powerful; their world lies
More justly balanced; partly at their feet,
And part far from them. Sweetest melodies
Are those that are by distance made more sweet;
Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,—
He is a slave—the meanest we can meet.

III.

Wings have we, and as far as we can go,
We may find pleasure—wilderness—and wood;
Blank ocean and mere sky support that mood,
Which, with the lofty, sanctifies the low.
Dreams—books—are each a world; and books we know
Are a substantial world—both pure and good;
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
Matter wherein right voluble I am,
To which I listen with a ready ear;
Two shall be named pre-eminently dear,—
The gentle lady married to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.

IV.

Nor can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote
From evil speaking; rancour never sought,
Comes to me not; malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought:
And thus, from day to day, my little boat
Rocks in its harbour, lodging peaceably.
Blessings be with them—and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares—
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight, by heavenly lays!
Oh! might my name be numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days."

The love of nature in Wordsworth led of course to the abhorrence of all affectation, all sham. With the quick eye of one who had walked much with nature, and had learned to know and read her various moods,

he easily detected the natural in manners and in tastes. Thus in the following Sonnet he denounces our meretricious ways, in sorrowing experience.

> "Oh, friend! I know not which way I must look
> For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,
> To think that now our life is only drest
> For show; mean handy work of craftsman, cook,
> Or groom! *We must run glittering like a brook*
> *In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:*
> The wealthiest man among us is the best.
> No grandeur now in nature or in book
> Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
> This is idolatry; and these we adore
> *Plain living and high thinking are no more:*
> The homely beauty of the good old cause
> Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence
> And pure religion breathing household laws."

Thus in brief, although in a chapter longest of any in the book, have we attempted to review some of those principles on which the Artist built his Edifices, and if further the reader should desire closely to study the Artist life of the Master, then let him attentively read those two books of the Prelude entitled, Imagination and Taste, how impaired and restored. We may notice that all the principles of his art revolved around Central Principles of Faith. Wordsworth not only Saw, but he Believed. He was to England what Schiller was to Germany, and he is that to us still; he reiterates doctrines to us. If not so earnest as Schiller, he was in earnest. He did not place things *merely* in their artistic points of view and there leave them, altogether

cut off from himself; in his life was the root and the ground of them; in his heart and his moral nature; and it may not be uninteresting to sketch out those views which seem to the eye most prominent in reading these poems, especially as they are developed in that poem, which was most fitted for their enunciation and unfoldment; thus

FIRST.—The lowest as well as the highest contains to him who listens and observes, matter for the most profound Reflection, Sympathy, and Thought.

It was this alliance of genius with lowest natures as we have seen, which exposed the Poet to the contempt of his critics. Most of his poems are devoted to subjects which had escaped the eyes of other men, but nothing escapes his sympathy.

> "Who can divine what impulses from God
> Reach the caged lark within a town abode?
> From his poor inch or two of daisyed sod:
> O yield him back his privilege! No sea
> Swells like the bosom of a man set free;
> A wilderness is rich with liberty."

Again, in a well-known and often-quoted passage, he says—

> "'Tis nature's law
> That none—the meanest of created things,
> Of forms created the most vile and brute
> The dullest or most noxious, should exist
> Divorced from good—a spirit and pulse of good,
> A life and soul to every mode of being
> Inseparably linked."

SECOND.—But this is only to be known by Reverence and Reverential Waiting and Watching.

Hence he says—and it is in harmony with his whole philosophy,

> "To humbleness of heart descends
> The prescience from on high,
> The faith that elevates the just,
> Before and when they die,
> And makes each soul a separate heaven,
> A court for Diety."

Again,

> "The eye it cannot choose but see,
> We cannot bid the ear be still,
> Our bodies feel where'er they be
> Against or with our will.
> Nor less I deem that there are powers
> Which of themselves our minds possess;
> When we can feed these minds of ours
> In a wise passiveness.
> Enough of science and of art,
> Close up the barren leaves;
> Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives."

THIRD.—That thus in fact all Nature exists for Man if he will only avail himself of it.

> "If the thing we seek
> Be genuine knowledge, bear we then in mind
> How from his lofty throne, the sun can fling
> Colours as bright on exhalations bred
> By weedy pool or pestilential swamp,
> As by the rivulet sparkling when it runs,
> Or the pellucid lake."

Again,

> "To every form of being is assigned
> An active principle, howe'er removed
> From sense and observation, it subsists
> In all things—"in all natures."

Again,

> "Within the soul a faculty abides
> That with interpositions, which would hide
> And darken, so can deal that they become
> Contingencies of pomp; and serve to exalt
> Her native brightness."

FOURTH.—But therefore there is danger lest the Baneful that is Exterior to Man be transferred Within him.

FIFTH.—Still the Evil and the Good may be around us, and yet we be ignorant of them, for he asserted upwards of fifty years since that the Eye can only see what it is fitted to see.

> "We see then as we feel.
> The mind's repose
> On evidence is not to be assured
> By act of naked reason. Moral truth
> Is no mechanic structure, built by rule."

SIXTH.—Hence not to Increase the circumference of our knowledge, but to Enlarge the vision of our moral Nature is of supreme importance,

> "How to acquire
> The inward principle that gives effect
> To outward argument."

SEVENTH.—Hence, in harmony with this, and resulting from this, it is that Life is what we make it, and Death is what we make it.

> "We may not doubt that who can best subject
> The will to reason's law, can strictliest live
> And act in that obedience, he shall gain
> The clearest apprehension of those truths
> Which reason's unassisted power
> Is too infirm to reach."

EIGHTH.—And thus we shall soon see that the charm, and the Greatness, and the Novelty of Life is in performing those Duties which lie nearest to us.

> "The primal duties shine aloft like stars
> The charities that soothe, and heal and bless
> Are scattered at the feet of man like flowers."

NINTH.—And hence the Greatness of Man and of Life is not in Dreaming but in Acting.

> "The food of hope
> Is meditated action."

"Thought and theory," he said once, "must precede all action, that moves to salutary purposes. Yet action is nobler in itself than either thought or theory." *

TENTH.—Yet in the midst of all our Duties and our Deeds, disappointments will meet us, and then we shall find Nature everywhere a source of consolation and joy. That Repose and Immobility which is to be

* Mrs. Jameson's Common Place Book, p. 15.

found nowhere in human history, is to be found in Nature, and there, is for ever a lenitive for all Despondency.

> "For the man
> Who in this spirit communes with the Forms
> Of Nature,
> Needs must feel
> The joy of that pure principle of love,
> * * * * *
> *The spiritual presences of absent things.*"

> "So build we up the being that we are
> Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,
> We shall be wise perforce.
> What e'er we see
> Or feel, shall tend to quicken and refine;
> Shall fix in calmer seats of moral strength
> Earthly desires; and raise to loftier heights
> Of divine love, our intellectual soul."

ELEVENTH.—But finally, even this fails without leaning in devout acquiescence and Faith on the strength and purity of the Divine Will.

> "By grace divine,
> Not otherwise, oh nature, we are thine."

> "In the port
> Of levity, no refuge can be found,
> No shelter for a spirit in distress.
> He who by wilful disesteem of life
> And proud insensibility to hope,
> Affronts the eye of solitude, shall learn
> That her mild nature can be terrible
> That neither she nor silence lack the power
> To avenge their own insulted majesty."

True repose arises from

"The unbounded might of prayer
To the soul fixed on the cross,
Consolation springs from sources deeper far than deepest pain
For the meek sufferer."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE LIFE.

"The correspondence between Wordsworth and Milton must be sought in their genius; not in the scale of their genius, equal though I deem it to be, nor yet in the kind of their genius, for though they have much in common, each has much that is peculiar; but in their lofty veneration for their genius as an emanation (from) rather than a gift of the eternal light; both writing under a sense of sacred duty, duty to God and Man, with a regal sense of irresponsibility to any number of individuals, Wordsworth alone, of all the followers of Milton, had a right to appropriate his 'Fit audience may I find though few.'"

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.—*Notes on the Poets.*

"Wordsworth is a genius superior to us, in so far as he can more than we make discoveries and shed a light on them. Here I *must* think he is deeper than Milton, though I think he has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of mind."

JOHN KEATS.—*Letters.*

"But something whispers to my heart,
  That as we downwards tend,
Lycoris' life requires an *art*
  To which our souls must bend.
  • • • • •
Oh! 'tis the heart that magnifies this life,
Making a truth and beauty of her own."

LYCORIS.

"The faith heaven strengthens where he moulds the creed."

WE must now return from the Land of Wordsworth and from readings, and illustrations of the peculiarities of his genius, again to the current of his life and his

domestic and personal history. Our last notices left him sorrowing over the death of his brother Captain Wordsworth. That death wrought very abiding impressions on his character; and beneath the influence of the softening feelings, the bereavement produced, he wrote the close of his posthumous poem, the Prelude. This was the work of the year 1805. The original plan was modified; it had been his intention to have called the poem known by the name of the Excursion, "The Pedlar," a title at the alteration of which every admirer of the poet must rejoice, and which perhaps resulted from the unyielding pertinacity with which he adhered to his first impressions and principles, connected with the exaltation of lowly life and humble labour, writing to Sir George Beaumont in 1805 he says,

"My dear Sir George, I write to you from the moss hut at the top of my orchard, the sun just sinking behind the hills in front of the entrance, and his light falling upon the green moss on the side opposite me. A linnet is singing in the tree above, and the children of some of our neighbours who have been to-day little James's visitors, are playing below, equally noisy and happy. The green fields in the level area of the vale, and part of the lake, lie before me in quietness. I have just been reading two newspapers full of factious brawls about Lord Melville and his delinquencies, ravage of the French in the West Indies, victories of the English in the East, fleets of ours roaming the sea in search of enemies whom they cannot find, etc., etc., and I have asked myself more than once lately, if my affections

can be in the right place, caring as I do so little about what the world seems to care so much for. All this seems 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' It is pleasant in such a mood to turn ones thoughts to a good man and a dear friend, I have therefore taken up the pen to write to you."

How clearly Wordsworth comprehended his work as a poet, is seen too in a very admirable letter written to Lady Beaumont; indeed the letter is more than admirable, it thrills the thoughtful reader like one of those prophecies in which genius ante-dates the period of its final triumph and success, it is written in 1807. We must quote some passages from it, as they very strikingly illustrate his moral history, and his abiding faith in the purpose, and the mission of his inspiration. "It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration the envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of merit from a living poet, but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldlings of every rank and situation must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings, and images, on which the life of my poems depends. The things which I have taken, whether from within or without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage, with Mr. Pitt, or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul, or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster Election or the borough of

Honiton? In a word, for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me. What have they to do with endless talking about things nobody cares any thing for, except as far as their own vanity is concerned, and this with persons they care nothing for, but as their vanity or their *selfishness* is concerned? What have they to do, to say all at once, with a life without love? In such a life there can be no thought, for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain) but as far as we have love and admiration.

"It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world; among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves people of consideration in Society.

"This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in any sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature, and reverence for God."

"Upon this I shall insist elsewhere, at present let me confine myself to my object, which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy hearted as myself with respect to these poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny? to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and to feel, and therefore to become more ac-

tively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves. I am well aware how far it would seem to many I overrate my own exertions, when I speak in this way in direct connection with the volume I have just made public; I am not however afraid of such censure, insignificant as probably the majority of those poems would appear to very respectable persons. I do not mean London wits and witlings, for these have too many foul passions about them to be respectable, even if they had more intellect than the benign laws of providence will allow to such a heartless existence as theirs; but grave, kindly-natured, worthy persons, who would be pleased if they could."

It was Wordsworth's opinion, and one in which he was assuredly right, that he was especially fitted for the calling of a landscape gardener. In the earlier part of his life his powers in this department were called in requisition by his friend Sir George Beaumont, for the gardens and grounds of Coleorton in Leicestershire; this led to several letters, (which are in fact essays) to Sir George upon gardening. Into this pursuit we must notice how, as in every thing else, he carries the spirit of his religion; he very beautifully says, "All first and solid pleasure in natural objects rests upon two pillars, God and Man. Laying out grounds as it is called, may be considered as a liberal art, in some sort like poetry and painting, and its object, like that of all the liberal arts, is, or ought to be to move the affections,

under the control of good sense; that is, those of the best and the wisest: but speaking with more precision, it is to assist nature in moving the affections, and surely as I have said, the affections of those who have the deepest perception of the beauty of Nature; who have the most valuable feelings, that is, the most permanent the most independent, the most ennobling, connected with nature and human life. No liberal art aims merely at the gratifying of an individual or a class; the painter or poet is degraded in proportion as he does so; the true servants of the arts pay homage to the human kind, as impersonated in unwarped and enlightened minds. If this be so when we are merely putting together words or colours, how much more ought the feeling to prevail when we are in the midst of the realities of things; of the beauty and harmony of this joy and happiness of loving creatures; of men and children; of birds and beasts; of hills and streams, and trees, and flowers, with the changes of night and day, evening and morning, summer and winter, and all their unwearied actions and energies, as benign in the spirit that animates them, as they are beautiful and grand in their form and clothing, which is given to them for the delight of our senses. In a word, all which I had to say would begin and end in the human heart, as under the direction of the Divine Nature, conferring value on the objects of the senses, and pointing out what is valuable in them."

Much of Wordsworth's time was spent at Colcorton, and spite of the noble and Christian sentiments con-

tained in the letter quoted above, some critics may feel a sentiment of dissatisfaction that the time of our poet was thus spent—it is true that his work and his mission lay in the immediate walks of nature, still we turn with more delight to those men, possessing the power of Wordsworth, whose lives were passed in other pursuits than merely laying out a garden—a worthy work indeed for the man of inferior powers, but not worthy of the man to whom it was privileged to walk through the recesses of the human soul. We had rather see Milton the schoolmaster, with his tribe of children about him: gratitude however to the good Sir George, no doubt had much to do with this devotement of mind—work in the ordinary sense of the word he seems never to have been called on to perform—he knew nothing of the task-master's toil; his mind wandered at its own will, and he was fortunate in being it seems always able to choose his own channels. His life was that of a quiet country gentleman, the necessity for effort never apparently lay on him—mysteriously the provision always came before the necessity.

But we must not convey the impression that the poet was idle, that his life was merely that of a moody dreamer; he read much, although the circle of his reading was contracted: he thought much on most of the topics which occupied the attention of the world, and he wrote much too. If the reader turns to his works he will find how many were the sonnets he wrote on the state of Europe; its varied and thrilling revolutions; its tyrannies and its battle plains; and as we see him

turning his attention in 1809 from landscape gardening to the events of the Convention of Cintra, we feel that the subject is worthier of a powerful human intelligence. To us it does not seem by any means great or admirable to behold a master mind, powerful among its fellows, concerning itself with the lower forms of nature, while men and nations need guidance, and groan for sympathy.

This is no place to attempt any characterization of the Congress of Cintra; discussion as to the views of Wordsworth upon that event would be out of place here. He thought the British honor was insulted by the cessation of the French war upon Spanish ground. It is not the duty of the biographer to advance views which are irrelevant to the immediate purpose of his life; they seem only the reveries of an Utopian, and it is quite bootless to ask such questions as to what Spain has gained at all by British interference; what might have been her destiny had the strong hand of the Corsican been allowed to beat down her petty anarchies, or if on that soil the question of Britain and France had come to an issue, as it might, had the war been prosecuted and the Convention Treaty not signed. Certainly we are not interested in this pamphlet of Wordsworth's from any clear idea of its political prescience and sagacity; but it is more natural to us to recur to views which it entertains and publishes on the state and progress of opinion in Europe in general.

Mr. Canning was greatly pleased with the pamphlet, and it was natural that that clear visioned statesman

should be pleased; he said it was the finest political publication since the days of Burke, and certainly however we may doubt the wisdom of some of its conclusions, its range of vision was immeasurably beyond that of the poor band of diminutive diplomatists who regarded the question at issue as settled, when they saw the French leave the Spanish peninsula. How much does the possession of present place, blind the eyes to future consequences, even when they are almost immediately present.

The following passage is one of those which will shew the reader that the pamphlet has a value beyond the occasion; it is a striking anticipative portrait of our age; but perhaps too much indulging that querulous spirit of dissatisfaction with the peculiarities of our civilization, now so general in expression.

"In many parts of Europe (and especially in our own country) men have been pressing forward for some time in a path which has betrayed by its fruitfulness; furnishing them constant employment for picking up things about their feet, when thoughts were perishing in their minds. While Mechanic Arts, Manufactures, Agriculture, Commerce, and all those products of knowledge which are confined to gross, definite, and tangible objects, have, with the aid of Experimental Philosophy, been every day putting on more brilliant colours; the splendour of the Imagination has been fading; Sensibility, which was formerly a generous nursling of rude Nature, has been chased from its ancient range in the wide domain of patriotism and religion with the wea-

pons of derision, by a shadow calling itself good sense; calculations of presumptuous expediency—groping its way among partial and temporary consequences—have been substituted for the dictates of paramount and infallible conscience, the supreme embracer of consequences; lifeless and circumspect Decencies have banished the graceful negligence and unsuspicious dignity of virtue.

"The progress of these arts also, by furnishing such attractive stores of outward accommodation, has misled the higher orders of society in their more disinterested exertions for the lower. Animal comforts have been rejoiced over, as if they were the end of being. A neater and more fertile garden; a greener field; implements and utensils more apt; a dwelling more commodious and better furnished; –let these be attained, say the actively benevolent, and we are sure not only of being in the right road, but of having successfully terminated our journey. Now a country may advance, for some time, in this course with apparent profit: these accommodations, by zealous encouragement, may be attained; and still the peasant or artisan, their master, be a slave in mind, a slave rendered even more abject by the very tenure under which these possessions are held; and, if they veil from us this fact, or reconcile us to it, they are worse than worthless. The springs of emotion may be relaxed or destroyed within him; he may have little thought of the past, and less interest in the future. The great end and difficulty of life for men of all classes, and especially difficult for those who live by manual labour, is a union of peace with innocent and

laudable animation. Not by bread alone is the life of man sustained; not by raiment alone is he warmed;—but by the genial and vernal inmate of the breast, which at once pushes forth and cherishes; by self-support and self-suffering endeavours; by anticipations, apprehensions, and active remembrances; by elasticity under insult, and firm resistance to injury; by joy, and by love; by pride which his imagination gathers in from afar; by patience, because life wants not promises; by admiration; by gratitude, which—debasing him not when his fellow-being is its object—habitually expands itself, for his elevation, in complacency towards his Creator."

Dr. Wordsworth says this pamphlet would, had his uncle never penned a line of poetry, have placed him in the very highest rank of English Poets. We cannot think so. This pamphlet bears no proportion to the weighty magnificence of Milton's prose, but passages like that we have quoted show its beauty and power. The author was frequently called upon to reprint it. He replied, "The respect I bear, in common with all the rest of the rational world, for the Duke of Wellington, will prevent my reprinting it during his life-time. It has not been in my power to read the volumes of his Dispatches which I hear so highly spoken of, but I am convinced that nothing they contain could alter my opinion of the injurious tendency of that, or any other convention conducted on such principles."

In the year 1809 the same in which the pamphlet on "Cintra," issued from the press, he published a paper

which deserves to be mentioned among his most delightful prose publications: it may be called "Advice to the Young,"—it appeared in Mr. Coleridge's "Friend," then in course of publication, and was a reply to questions now understood to be put in an essay of great interest by Professor Wilson, under the signature of "Mathetes." This may rank among the most useful, graceful and impressive of the Poet's writings.* In so short a space there is not in our language so useful an essay on the course of mental and moral discipline desirable for an ingenuous youth. The following year, 1810, he gave to the world a paper on a subject which he was indeed well fitted to treat—Epitaphs. This also was published in "The Friend," and now occupies a place as an appendix to the Excursion. In the same year, 1810, appeared his Remarks on the Scenery of the Lakes. Thus it will be seen our author was not idle, and the matters with which he occupied himself, while they have a poetical unity, have also a poetical variety. In addition to these works he occupied himself by translations from Chiabrera, from Danté, and Michael Angelo. And changes were going on too in his family. We have not stayed to notice the birth of children. John was born the 18th of June, 1803; his beloved "Dora,"—Dorothy, August 16th, 1804; Thomas, June 16th, 1806; Catharine, September 6th, 1808; and William, May 12th, 1810. The traveller to Grasmere will find the tomb and an epitaph over two of these, Thomas and Catherine,

* See "The Friend," vol. III.

who died very young. In 1807 he removed from Grasmere to Allan Bank, at the head of the Lake, and in 1813 he removed to his last living home, the place with which his name will be ever associated, Rydal Mount.

In 1810 appeared THE EXCURSION. It had been the occupation of years of thought and observation, and time has settled its place in our literature. When the reader remembers, as he probably will, the sweet and sacred enjoyment he has derived from this divine poem, in quiet walks in shady places, by still family firesides, in sacred companionship in all quiet hours; when the reader recalls the charm of pathetic description with which the poem abounds—the lofty and passionate invocation, and the strong and sonorous line; when he recurs again to the consolations soothing and gentle, the lenitives of sorrow which enrich its verses, the beautiful village Idyls and Eclogues, paintings of rural joys and sorrows; when the fine philosophical disquisition is remembered, the glowing and gorgeous representations of the old world with its superstitions of faith and fear; when finally he remembers that there is no poem in the language like it—that it occupies a place solitary and its own—that it is as much marked by individuality and character, as any poem in our language which has received the suffrages of posterity, bearing no resemblance in manner or plan to any poem attempted before; when all this is recalled, the reader may well become indignant at its reception, and he is compelled to regard Lord Jeffrey in his relation to

Wordsworth from the same point of vision as he regards Kenrick in his relation to Goldsmith.

But there is no surer mark and test of genius than that on its appearance the lesser men are unable to know or appreciate it. Lord Jeffrey in his review declared "with most sincere pain and reluctance that Wordsworth was finally lost to the good cause of poetry!" "The volume before us, if we were to describe it very shortly, we should characterise as a tissue of moral and *devotional ravings*, in which innumerable changes are rung upon a few simple and familiar ideas, but with such an accompaniment of *long words, long sentences, and unwieldy phrases*, and *such a hubbub of strained raptures and fantastical sublimities*, that it is often extremely difficult for the most skilful and attentive student to obtain a glimpse of the author's meaning! ..... All sorts of common-place notions and expressions are sanctified in his eyes by the sublime ends for which they are employed; and *the mystical verbiage of the methodist pulpit* is repeated till the speaker entertains no doubt that he is the elected organ of divine truth and persuasion! In this production he is more obscure than a Pindaric poet of the seventeenth century, and more verbose than even himself of yore—he has thought fit to make the chief advocate of Providence and Virtue in this poem an old Scotch Pedlar—retired indeed from business—but still rambling about among his old haunts, and gossiping with his old customers, without his pack on his shoulder. The other persons of the drama are a retired military chaplain,

who has grown half an atheist and half a misanthrope; the wife of an unprosperous weaver—a servant girl with her infant—a parish pauper, and one or two other personages of equal rank and dignity. The tale of Margaret, in the commencement, fills about twenty-five pages, and abounds, of course, with monkish sentiment, and details of preposterous minuteness." Some of the criticisms are not more creditable to Jeffrey's piety than to his taste, though piety is out of the question in a man who could not even write his letters without indulging in oaths;* it is not wonderful, therefore, if the prayers and aspirations with which the Excursion abounds should seem to him only "rapturous mysticism, eluding all comprehension, illustrating the author's talent for enveloping a plain and trite observation in all the mock-majesty of solemn verbosity!" Such was Lord Jeffrey's review of the Excursion. Would it not be easy to perceive that it is the religion and piety of the poem which made it the object of the reviewer's scorn.

Since reviewing has been a craft, there have been many shameful and shameless reviews; but there never has been one more shameful than that of the "Excursion," by Lord Kenrick Jeffrey; it contained every kind of injustice from little meanness and malicious malevolence, to talented and laboured misrepresentation. On the publication of this review, James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, wrote to Robert Southey, "I suppose you have heard what a crushing review he has given the

* See Life and Letters by Lord Cockburn.

Excursion." Poor Jeffrey. He no doubt intended it to be so. But Southey replied—"He crush the Excursion!! Tell him he might as easily crush Skiddaw!"

On all hands the reception of the Excursion was unfortunate. Charles Lamb had been requested by Dr. Southey to write the critique upon it for the "Quarterly Review," then edited by William Gifford, a name it is impossible to pronounce or write without strong feelings of admiration and others almost amounting to contempt. Lamb wrote the review with all the fervent feelings of admiration and friendship: it was full of the highest regard and affection both for the book and the author. Gifford altered it so as substantially to make quite another paper of it. The following is Lamb's very characteristic letter upon it to Wordsworth.

"Dear Wordsworth,

"I told you my review was a very imperfect one. But what you will see in the 'Quarterly' is a spurious one, which Mr. Baviad Gifford has palmed upon it for mine. I never felt more vexed in my life than when I read it. I cannot give you an idea of what he has done to it out of spite at me, because he suffered me to be called a lunatic in his review.* The language he has altered throughout. Whatever inadequateness it had to its subject, it was, in point of composition, the prettiest piece of prose I ever writ; and so my sister (to whom alone I read the MS.) said. That

* Referring to a most painful family circumstance in Lamb's history.

charm, if it had any, is all gone; more than a third of the substance is cut away, and that not all from one place, but *passim* so as to make utter nonsense. Every warm expression is changed for a nasty cold one.

"I have not the cursed alteration by me; I shall never look at it again; but for a specimen, I remember I had said—'the poet of the Excursion walks through common forests as through some Dodona or enchanted wood, and every casual bird that flits upon the boughs, like that miraculous one in Tasso, but in language more piercing than any articulate sounds reveals to him far higher love lays.' It is now (besides half-a-dozen alterations in the same half-dozen lines) 'but in language more *intelligent* reveals to him:' that is one I remember.

"But that would have been little, putting his shoemaker, phraseology (for he *was* a shoe-maker) instead of mine, which has been tinctured with better authors than his ignorance can comprehend; for I reckon myself a dab at *prose;* verse I leave to my betters: God help them if they are to be reviewed by friend and foe as you have been this quarter! I have read 'It Wont do.' * But worse than altering words; he has kept a few members only of the part I had done best, which was to explain all I could of your Scheme of Harmonies, as I had ventured to call it, between the external universe, and what within us answers to it. To do this I had accumulated a good many short passages, rising in length to the end—weaving in the extracts as if they

* The first sentence in Jeffrey's critique.

came in as a part of the text naturally,—not obtruding them as specimens. Of this part a little is left, but so as, without conjuration, no man could tell what I was driving at. A proof of it you may see (though not judge of the whole of the injustice) by these words. I had spoken something about 'natural methodism,' and after follows 'and therefore the tale of Margaret should have been postponed.' (I forget my words, or his words) now, the reasons for postponing it are as reducible from what goes before, as they are from the 104th Psalm; the passage whence I deduced it has vanished; but clapping a colon before a therefore, is always reason enough for Mr. Baviad Gifford to allow to a reviewer that is not himself. I assure you my complaints are founded. . I know how sore a word altered makes one; but, indeed, of this review, the whole complexion is gone. I regret only that I did not keep a copy. I am sure you would have been pleased with it, because I have been feeding my fancy for some months with the notion of pleasing you. Its imperfection or inadequateness in size or method I knew, but for *the writing part* of it I was fully satisfied; I hoped it would make more than atonement. Ten or twelve distinct passages come to my mind, which are gone, and what is left is, of course the worse for their having been there; the eyes are pulled out, and the bleeding sockets are left.

"I read it at Arch's shop, my face burning with vexation secretly, with just such a feeling as if it had been a review written against myself, making false quotations

from me; but I am ashamed to say so much about a short piece. How are *you* served! and the labours of years turned into contempt by scoundrels.

"But I could not but protest against your taking that thing as mine. Every *pretty* expression; (I know there were many) every warm expression; (there was nothing else) is vulgarized and frozen. But if they catch me in their camps again let them spitchcock me! They had a right to do it as no name appears to it, and Mr. Shoemaker Gifford I suppose never waived a right he had since he commenced Author. Heaven confound him, and all caitiffs.

"C. L."

While we speak in strong terms of the injustice and tergiversation of Jeffrey and his compeers, we must not forget that Wordsworth was certainly heading a revolution in the World of Letters, and especially in the World of Poetry. Two writers, the one in the Quarterly, the other in Blackwood, say, Wordsworth did not head the re-action—he was the child of it. Of course! so Luther was the child of the Reformation, and Hampden and Cromwell of the English Revolution; but this is fastidious; great men concentrate and anticipate the ages; they antedate and forestall, as well as command the coming times. But Wordsworth was not merely a re-action—he might have been that had he simply given fresh form and body to previously existing Schools; had he been as the eminently shallow Jeffrey describes him as being—*an imitator of Cowper!* but there had

been no likeness to Wordsworth's genius in any previous School; it was reserved for him to give a voice and a meaning to mute and to material things.

The Revolutions of Literature and Poetry are not like the Revolutions of Nations, attended with bloodshedding, and the sounds of martial strife, yet they too are attended by notes which no less than the more sanguine and sensual and sinful clang, proclaim the departure of one Æra and the dawning of another; the partizans of Taste do not easily relinquish their hold upon their favourite authors—the advocates of certain styles of sentiment and utterance, are not readily persuaded to abandon their darling models, and to bow down in a new Studio. There is as iron a Rule—as inflexible a Dynasty in the Empire of Letters, as in the Kingdoms of State, and the Courts of Princes.

It is very curious, and surely not alone interesting but very instructive too, to watch the Rise, Decline, and Fall of certain Dynasties in the World of Letters; for a time some one name obtains an eminence and homage most deserved—this idolatry leads in many contemporary instances to servile adoration—another age arrives—some strong mind arrives with the age; succeeds in raising a protest against the dominant tone or taste, and that which was once the object of worship, is forsaken by the many only to be prized and regarded by the select and the intelligent few; the name is written in the history of the Land's Letters; the works are treasured and shrined in the best and most select libraries, but the state of feeling that produced those works

has passed, and with the universal feeling, the universal demand for those works has passed away too.

Every really great and original name lives, but imitators, as their's is an automaton life, are destined to a sure and speedy oblivion. Every really great and original poet represents not only an historical state of emotion, but therefore a state possible to every man, and to be experienced in degree by every man, yet great names are usually waited upon, not because either love or instinct guide the feelings, but even as the crowds hurry to gape on the procession moving beneath the triumphal arch, or the mob hastens to witness the tumbler or the booth at the country fair; to most persons it will be for some time to come a sufficient warrant for the worth of their object, and for their homage and their curiosity, that the multitudes have gone out to gape and to gaze, this is no satire, it is the order of the world, nor should it be too rashly and highly censured; censure only is due when men will praise or blame, where they are wholly incompetent to pass an opinion.

The Dynasties of English Letters have been many, but we look back upon the founders of those Dynasties as not less than real and veritable Kings, although the unquestioning homage to their sceptre has quite passed away, for tastes and emotions as we have already indicated vary as much as nations; nay, they vary with the manners, the spirit, and the intelligence of nations. The literature and poetic mind of a highly religious, an enthusiastic, and superstitious period and people, cannot

be the same as that of a people cold in faith, formal in creed, and material in all their images and perceptions the poetic mind of a people rising in all its naked and undiseased grandeur, must differ from that of a people yielding to the debasement of a corrupt age, and clothing itself in the meretricious garments of an ignoble time; and great men, especially great poets, anticipate the age to come, they are the focal point and glass of the future age, or of their own; in their prescience they see what is to be the future thought, and mental and moral life; its evil or its good at once flow forth from them, they are Prophets and Seers—they receive and they give—the spirit of the future imprints itself on them, and they in turn fashion and shape out the mould in which is formed the mind of their young countrymen.

Ours is an Unpoetical Age, say the sentimental lispers, who expect that Poetry is ever to be a beautiful Miniature set with brilliants—a Musical Snuff Box elegantly diamonded. To most people every age they live in must seem unpoetical; all travellers like to look at distant mountains, but it is reserved for a few to feel exultation and pleasure in climbing, and in remaining for a whole day on the top of the lofty peaks; few enjoy the cold bracing winds, few feel pleasure in the muscular excitement and energy of the long journey. The Ages of Stone were not poetical when Abury and Stonehenge were reared, and the silences of the moors and forests, and deserts spread over the land. The Age of Castles was not poetical, when those grim Monuments of Feudalism rose from coast to coast of our island,

the chartered Palaces of Force and Fraud. A Castle is sublime in a picture or a poem, but not so to a city of the middle and dark ages. If Poetry be the power of clothing material forms with spiritual abstractions; or spiritual abstractions with material forms; or if poetry be the power of awaking interest in the mind from objects arresting, and human, and exciting, then indeed Our Age is Poetical. The Poetry may not be of the same order or character as the preceding or succeeding ages, for the ages are not alike, they vary as they roll, but they are not the less spiritual, and by and by when the distance of time shall deepen the twilight around us, and when to our children the memory shall silver over harsh objects, and bring the stern into tender lights, then the present age will seem poetical, with its wild excitements, its Australian diggings, its mighty Railway Viaducts, its prodigious conquests of Science, making the Tales of Arabian Entertainments the mere prattlings of infancy by their side; and it may then be seen too, that this age in the objective forms of its literature, was healthy beyond our disposition to recognize now, and that the blaze streaming from all points over the language adorning and illustrating it has not been less than illustrious, and that if not rivalling the highest masters, yet in all particulars occupying ground never occupied by those masters, that mighty minds, have been produced, the genuine birth of the peculiar forms of our century's thought; minds it may be, exhibiting some impatience in many instances, but yet the impatience of wealth determined on building a Palace; and fre-

quently a calm and settled dignity, like that of those cold and less impulsive ages; a grandeur of Architecture hewing Titanic Rocks into Fanes, and forming from the most august presences of Nature, not merely a passion and a song, but an abiding home and residence of beauty; a perpetual Alhambra of national genius, and grace in the language.

Meantime we must not forget that during these years time had introduced Wordsworth to some new friends, and had brought other old ones into a new neighbourhood to him; we have seen that he has been the inhabitant of three homes during his marriage life; the first at Grasmere he has described in lines of vivid beauty, a portion of them we have already quoted; his second at Allan Bank, at the head of Grasmere Lake; both of them are looked at with loving and reverential eyes by the Pilgrims of the Lakes; his third at Rydal was the poet's Bandusia, and will always be regarded as such, although there are perhaps few mental traits which should call up to the mind the thought of Horace when we read or think of Wordsworth.

All his homes were within two miles of each other, and all in the same parish. He was in reality the poet of Grasmere, as Rydal is only a little hamlet belonging to the parish of Grasmere.

In reading the life of Wordsworth by his nephew, the reader feels disappointment of many kinds, but especially from the fact that the biography appears to have no appreciation of the relation of the poet to many of his illustrious contemporaries; Dr. Wordsworth

says very dogmatically "Let no other life of Wordsworth be composed beside what has thus been written with his own hand." But that sentence is prefatory to a life extending over nine hundred pages, and is therefore simply ludicrous; with the materials in the hands of the poet's biographer, and the length through which he has conducted his readers, it must be thought that a book has been produced which fails to give an account of the life of the man. Some persons who knew Wordsworth well, seem to be strangely forgotten and slighted. We see but little even of Coleridge and Southey, and nothing of Wilson and De Quincey; an ordinary reader feels that there is an evident, a very evident attempt to exhibit the poet in his aristocratical relationship; he is not painted in those larger and more human points of vision which are the most interesting to all readers. There are two great paintings of Wordsworth; there is one painted for Cambridge hanging in St. John's Hall, by Pickersgill. There is another "Wordsworth upon Helvellyn" by Haydon. The biographer thought more of the first, and the place in which it hangs, than of the last, the place on which the poet is represented as sitting. In his life by his nephew, Wordsworth is like the portrait in the first volume; he looks too gentlemanly; too proper; the portrait wants the ease, the *abandonment*, the careless grace, which were certainly his if they were ever any man's, especially the eye longs to see him among his friends in his social undress; of all men living, the man who could best write the life of Wordsworth is the man who venerated him for fifty

years, his intimate companion whose name never occurs in the volumes of his life—DE QUINCEY.

It is possible that there were many things in the manners of the English Opium Eater which did not meet the perfect sympathy of the poet; but both from poet and biographer the homage with which he had treated Wordsworth, and the courage with which he dared to defend him when not a voice of the two or three who had heard of his name was raised in his defence and honour, this ought to have procured (from the biographer especially) some respectful mention. It will not be out of place to allow De Quincey to speak here of his first homage to Wordsworth.

"But, on this subject, a fact still remains to be told, of which I am justly proud; and it will serve, beyond any thing else I can say, to measure the degree of my intellectual development. On coming to Oxford, I had taken up one position in advance of my age by full thirty years: that appreciation of Wordsworth which it has taken full thirty years to establish amongst the public, I had already made, and had made operative to my own intellectual culture in the same year when I clandestinely quitted school. Already, in 1802, I had addressed a letter of fervent admiration to Wordsworth. I did not send it until the spring of 1803; and, from misdirection, it did not come into his hands for some months. But I had an answer from Mr. Wordsworth *before I was eighteen;* and that my letter was thought to express the homage of an enlightened admirer, may be inferred from the fact that *his answer was long and*

*full.** On this anecdote I do not mean to dwell; but I cannot allow the reader to overlook the circumstances of the case.

"At this day, it is true, no journal can be taken up which does not habitually speak of Mr. Wordsworth as of *a* great if not *the* great poet of the age. Mr. Bulwer living in the intensest pressure of the world, and though recoiling continually from the judgments of the world, yet never in any violent degree, ascribes to Mr. Wordsworth (in his England and the English, p. 308,) 'an influence of a more noble and purely intellectual character than *any* writer of our age or nation has exercised.' Such is the opinion held of this great poet in 1835; but what were those of 1805—15—nay, of 25? For twenty years after the date of that letter to Mr. Wordsworth above referred to, language was exhausted, ingenuity was put on the rack, in the search after images and expressions vile enough—insolent enough, to convey the unutterable contempt avowed for all that he had written by the fashionable critics. One critic, who still, I believe, edits a rather popular journal, and who belongs to that class, feeble, fluttering, ingenious; who make it their highest ambition not to lead, but, with a slave's adulation, to obey and to follow all the caprices of the public mind—described Mr. Wordsworth as resembling in the quality of his mind, "an old nurse babbling in her paralytic dotage to sucking babies." If this insult was peculiarly felt by Mr. Wordsworth, it was on a consi-

* For the italics the present author is responsible.

deration of the unusual imbecility of him who offered it, and not because in itself it was baser or more insolent than the language held by the majority of journalists who then echoed the public voice. *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817) first accustomed the public ear to the language of admiration coupled with the name of Wordsworth. This began with Professor Wilson; and well I remember—nay the proofs are still easy to hunt up—that, for eight or ten years, this singularity of opinion, having no countenance from other journals, was treated as a whim, a paradox, a bold extravagance of the *Blackwood* critics. Mr. Wordsworth's neighbours in Westmoreland, who had (generally speaking) a profound contempt for him, used to rebut the testimony of Blackwood by one constant reply—'Ay, *Blackwood* praises Wordsworth, but who else praises him?' In short, up to 1820, the name of Wordsworth was trampled under foot; from 1820 to 1830 it was militant: from 1830 to 1835 it has been triumphant. In 1803, when I entered at Oxford, that name was absolutely unknown; and the finger of scorn pointed at it in 1802 by the first or second No. of the *Edinburgh Review*, failed to reach its mark from absolute defect of knowledge in the public mind. Some fifty beside myself knew who was meant by 'that poet who had cautioned his friend against growing double,' &c.; to all others it was a profound secret.

"These things must be known and understood properly to value the prophetic eye and the intrepidity of two persons, like Professor Wilson and myself, who, in

1802-3, attached themselves to a banner not yet raised and planted; who outran, in fact, their contemporaries by one entire generation; and did *that* about 1802 which the rest of the world are doing in chorus about 1832. Until Lord Byron had begun to pilfer from Wordsworth and to abuse him, allusions to Wordsworth were not frequent in conversation, and it was chiefly on occasion of some question arising about poetry in general, or about the poets of the day, that it became difficult to dissemble."*

When the character of the contempt and scorn is recollected which was heaped upon the writings of the poet at this early period, it may possibly be thought that posterity may be interested in knowing who were the first who directed the way to a more elevated and catholic taste, and thus, giving honor to whom honor is due.

During the period of his residence at Oxford, De Quincey made two pilgrimages to the Lakes in order to see Wordsworth, but was afraid to venture into the presence of the object of his Intellectual Homage. Once he tells us how he went from Coniston to the very verge of Hamerscar; he saw the lovely valley of Grasmere—the lake, and the beautiful island of five acres seemingly floating on its surface, its bays and fern clad and flowery banks;—he saw the little cottage, Wordsworth's first marriage home, gleaming from its "inverted grove" of

* Autobiography of the "English Opium Eater," published in Tait's Magazine, vol. II. 1835.

trees, and the seemingly never ending series of rocks rising above it to the height of more than three thousand feet—the house in which he subsequently lived himself; and then he started back, retreating, as he says, like a guilty thing, for fear he might be surprised by Wordsworth, returning faint hearted to Coniston and to Oxford, from mere nervous distrust of his own powers for sustaining a conversation with Wordsworth, shrinking from a conversation and a meeting for which beyond all things under heaven he longed. Homage like this from such a man deserves affectionate mention in a biography of the subject of the homage. At last they met in 1807, and shortly after, De Quincey continued to reside at Grasmere. He gives to us the account of his first trip thither in reality to see the Poet, with Mrs. Coleridge. De Quincey does not hesitate to charge the Poet with coldness, with want of generosity of heart and character; we should think it very likely, yet his statements must be received with some feeling of reservation, not from doubt of his veracity, but from recollection of the severely prudent and proper behaviour of Wordsworth; who had none of the dear dashing inconsiderateness for which poets have been renowned. It would seem, from the Opium Eater's writings, that he had sought Wordsworth's friendship and aid to procure him some position, and had been unsuccessful. He says,

"I imagine a case such as this which follows," De Quincey says, in alluding to the estrangement spoken of above—"the case of a man who for many years has

connected himself with the domestic griefs and joys of another, over and above his primary service of giving to him the strength and the encouragement of a profound literary sympathy, at a a time of universal scorning from the world; suppose this man to fall into a situation, in which, from want of natural connections, and from his state of insulation in life, it might be most important to his feelings that some support should be lent to him by a friend having a known place and acceptation, and what may be called a root in the country, by means of connections, descent, and long settlement. To look for this might be a most humble demand on the part of one who had testified his devotion in the way supposed. To miss it might——But enough. I murmur not; complaint is weak at all times; and the hour is passed irrevocably, and by many a year, in which an act of friendship so natural, and costing so little (in both senses so priceless), could have been availing. The ear is deaf that should have been solaced by the sound of welcome. Call, but you will not be heard; shout aloud, but your 'ave!' and 'all hail!' will now tell only as an echo of departed days, proclaiming the hollowness of human hopes. I, for my part, have long learned the lesson of suffering in silence; and also I have learned to know that, wheresoever female prejudices are concerned, *there* it will be a trial, more than Herculean, of a man's wisdom, if he can walk with an even step, and swerve neither to the right nor to the left."

Time will set this mythic friendship right, and bring

out all its circumstances of sadness. Meanwhile De Quincey is Wordsworth's neighbour; he is among the Lakes that mythical personage of whom everybody has heard, and of whom everybody knows so little; an amazing contrast to Wordsworth surely everyway, and yet that, one would have thought, might have cemented their sympathy and their friendship. His whole life indeed a never ending opium dream, tossed to and fro from the bowers of bliss to the deep forests of horror; with a fancy illimitable in its range, and an eye longing to pierce through all things, and an ear most reverently listening; and a pen so eloquent, so careless, yet evidently so painfully, so laboriously rich in discussion and description; with a knowledge so wondrously ample, and the power to awaken in all others a love to all interesting to him. It was surely noticeable that such a man should be the first to perceive the grandeur concealed in those simple Lyrical Ballads. He has written for everything, his writings lie over our whole periodical literature, yet who knows him? who has ever defined his place. With all that matchless wealth and power, he has allowed the golden ball to slip by him; with a profusion of fancy in him, fitting him to be our English Wieland, he has wasted his time in merely being "our sub-editor"—such was De Quincey, whom, if the reader know at all, he will think of as a motion, and a presence and an energy, rather than a man of flesh and blood. His mythical life seems to us like the title of his best known performance—it is ethereal—intangible—the

life of a Dream, of a Name—"The Life of an Opium Eater."

Twelve miles distant from Rydal, at Keswick, Mr. Wordsworth had another neighbour, one of the intellectual peerage of England, ROBERT SOUTHEY; and it is not doubtful that the departure of Mr. Wordsworth to the Lakes, and his fixing there his permanent residence, had its influence in bringing Southey there also; a distance of twelve miles is a near neighbourhood in thinly-peopled and rural districts. Wordsworth and Southey had met and formed an intimacy at Bristol; since then both had married, and Southey had spent some time in Spain, a visit which exercised a very decided influence over his reading, his researching, and his publication. The ties however which bound the two poets together do not seem to have been more than that of natural respect. Southey indeed held the writings of his neighbour and friend in high esteem and homage, but their worlds were essentially different—poles assunder.

Southey was in every respect a man of Books; he read books in all languages, on all subjects; he bought books by the ship load. We have an account in his life of a whole freightage consigned to him from Spain; he wrote for innumerable magazines, and cited many works; reviewed on all men and subjects, and lengthily so; he was a Poet, a Philosopher, Historian, Biographer, Reviewer, Politician; moreover, he was a most admirable Correspondent, and his habits naturally for such a man, were arranged with a punctilious regard to order; he seems yet to have had a more homely and

loving and lovable nature than Wordsworth. He fulfilled the duties of life as well, but his way was more difficult. Robert Southey in his early days had not even the scanty dependence of his friend. He tells us he was often dinnerless, from inability to provide himself with a meal. He raised himself to perfect independence and to his honor, it ought always to be known that at a time when he was toiling for bread, Coleridge's deserted wife and children found a permanent and kind home in his house. De Quincey describes the spiritual relationship between the two poets as not perfect; they did not sympathize fully with each other. Southey lived in his library—Wordsworth lived within the shadow of Helvellyn. Wordsworth, as we have seen, had no books—had no study; his study was out of doors—by the Lake, on the Mountains. He had no systematic literary labour to perform—he needed no library large, various, and costly, for reference. "To let him into your library," said Southey, once, "is like letting a bear into a tulip garden." De Quincey tells us that one morning Wordsworth, being at his house at Grasmere, to breakfast, took a knife smeared with butter to cut a new and handsome volume of Burke's works. All of Southey's books were bound and arranged with neatness and order; Wordsworth had only a few old torn volumes on the shelves in the back parlour, which he seemed to take a pride in telling his visitor, if the conversation turned that way, were *all* he had. Yet, possibly, the two poets loved each other. Southey had but little time to give to friendship; he

had the ear of the world; he was interested in all that was interesting to the world's welfare. Looking along the range of volumes compiled or written by him; we can only say—prodigious! We turn from his Prose so perfect—so like a clear transparent wave—to his Poetry; we find the descriptions most accurate, and natural, and true, his love to humanity, and to truth most deep and fervent. But we find frequently Ideas and Images, and places and situations so startlingly strange; for he removed his poetry too far from the region of ordinary sympathy,—he encumbered his genius by the wealth and the magnificence of his amazing and most curious knowledge. Few are the readers who will be disposed to follow him into the dreadful darkness and flames of the Domdaniel Caves, in "Thalaba the wild and wondrous tale;" and the structures of his genius remind the reader of Infinite Arabesques,—their Humanity belongs to the Age of Marvels; we walk as amidst the fantastic Architecture of Giants, the streets of tombs, of pyramids, of palaces and sphinxes, in which the splendour of the conception is frequently eclipsed by its singularity, and the beauty lost in the myriad minded mythology. Such was Southey's more ambitious poetry, but His Ballads, whether for terror or for humour, have a truly deep and ballad-like charm over us. We could wish sometimes that his pen had not been so harsh; that that "Quarterly" had not spoken with so much asperity, that there had been something less of haughtiness in that air, that his antagonist had not been so often suspected of dishonesty; but we can only love him, and as

we read of him at Bristol or at Greta Hall, struggling with life and its thousand ills, or crowned with the laurels of the Poet Laureat, we can only think a fitting neighbour and friend had Wordsworth in Robert Southey.

Residing frequently beneath the same roof as Southey, indeed generally there when in the Lake district, was one who has large claims on the thought and gratitude of the presetn and of future generations—that divine madman, SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. He had been intimate with Wordsworth in Bristol, where they had published together the volumes of Lyrical Ballads. The mental and moral relationship between him and Wordsworth was very close, the great principle of character which separated them was in the—Will; poor Coleridge had no will, he lay at the mercy of circumstances, a vagrant fancy, and a boundless speculation, like two wild prancing steeds bore the chariot of his volitions irresistibly on, he knew not, he cared not whither. His life was one charade of misery, he had no command over any faculty of his nature, so as to harness it and discipline it; but his lordship over mental continents was boundless; by pen or by tongue his power was imperial. No doubt of all Wordsworth's friends, he had most perfect sympathy with this most erratic child of genius, and the homage was entirely mutual. But in Coleridge there was no sort of consistency, few things that he did cohered together, and he did not cohere himself; he was a fractured diamond, the parts of which were held together by some occult sympathy; his

Unity was felt, but certainly not seen. He was another of those distinguished Lakers; he laboured hard to bring up the public taste to an appreciation of Wordsworth, and he did not labour in vain. Bad as the life of Coleridge looks by the side of his great compeer, Wordsworth had more Earth in his nature than he; he looks sorely stained as we survey his life, but we soon see that it is the stained plumage, and broken wing of a beautiful bird, decoyed into a climate not its own, and repentant beneath its crushed feathers, for its follies, and its faults.*

No adequate estimate has ever hitherto been formed of this great man; every thing about him is so difficult to reach; many lives have been written of him, not one by a person able to comprehend him, or to perform the task. His was no life or character to be apprehended by a mere Boswell, and yet little lame Boswells have been his only biographers. Wordsworth called him "the most wonderful man he had ever known;" "wonderful for the originality of his mind, and the power he possessed of throwing out in profusion grand central truths from which might be evolved the most comprehensive systems;" on another occasion Wordsworth said "He and my beloved sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted." Coleridge illustrates to us the possibility of the possession of amazing intellectual wealth, with the occupancy of an inferior mental station, in the com-

* See Cottle's Life and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge.

monwealth of Letters, simply from the want of that patient and abiding will which sits by the furnace of genius, and controls the fire, and moulds the precious metal to a form of abiding beauty. Amazing Being—sometimes he reels before our eyes like an intoxicated angel, and sometimes he towers before us like the very archangel of the morning light; he had powers equal to every thing but performance; he was impatient of the clay; he seemed to have abandoned the conditions of time and space; he lived within; he could not comprehend such a word as—Ought! or such a principle as —Duty. As he rose himself, without mechanics, and needed none of the vulgar leverage and wedgework of life, he could not apply himself to the use of such for others. There never was a man of whom you felt that he so nearly approached the black continent of evil without being bad; there never was one who seemed so innocent and so lovely of whom you had so much hesitation in pronouncing him good. He was everywhere, an amazing paradox.

Thus his mental powers were of a most astonishing order; he was too great a man to believe that the universe was a dead stone, or that Pope had exhausted the art of poetry, and therefore it may be naturally supposed that Jeffrey derived sport from him.* Poor Cole-

* The following are some of Jeffrey's criticisms on Coleridge's "Crystabel."

"There is literally *not one couplet in the publication before us which would be reckoned poetry, or even common sense, were it found in the corner of a newspaper, or upon the window of an inn.*"

ridge could not so well afford to lose the sale of a volume of poems as Wordsworth; his pen was bread indeed to him, but that mattered little to the Editor of the Edinburgh; while the Quarterly was digging its pen into the

"*The thing* before us is *utterly destitute of value;* it exhibits from beginning to end, *not a ray of genius*, and we defy any man to point out a passage of poetical merit in any of the three pieces which it contains, except perhaps the following lines. pp. 32."

"We look upon this publication as one of the most notable pieces of impertinence of which the press has lately been guilty."

"We shall say nothing of the monstrous assurance of any man coming forward coolly at this time of day, and telling the reader of English poetry whose ear has been tuned to the lays of Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Pope, that he makes his metre on a new principle."—Edinburgh Review, vol. XXVII. p. 59—67.

The verdicts of Lord Jeffrey were absolutely worthless, and they revealed an utter disqualification for the perception of the true foundation of genius; he thought Coleridge would be remembered as a dramatist, (See Edinburgh Review, vol. XXVII. p. 444. Ditto vol. XXXVI. p. 416.) a mental occupation in which his reputation and character were certainly very small. Of his essays he says, "he has laid himself out in absurdity, and availed himself of the privilege, not sparingly, of talking nonsense." But we must cite as a specimen of Lord Jeffrey's critical sagacity Mr. Coleridge's description of a green field, a passage which his Lordship describes as "laborious foolery." !! "I have at this moment before me, in the flowery meadow on which my eye is reposing, one of nature's most soothing chapters, in which there is no lamenting word, no one character of guilt or anguish; for never can I look on the vegetable creation without a feeling similar to that with which we gaze at a beautiful infant, that has fed itself asleep at its mother's bosom, and smiles in its strange dream of obscure, yet happy sensations. The same tender and genial pleasure takes possession of me, and this pleasure is checked and drawn inward by the like aching melancholy, by the same whispered remonstrance, and made restless by a similar impulse of aspiration. It seems as if the soul said to herself 'From this state hast thou fallen! Such

heart of a poor lad dying of consumption,* its rival was doing its best to aid in the starvation of a man who was, perhaps, doing more to cultivate profound habits of mental observation than any other Englishman of his day.

* "Who kill'd John Keats?
I, said the Quarterly,
Savage and Tartarly—
I kill'd John Keats."

LORD BYRON.

should thou still become, thyself all permeable to a holier power! Thyself at once hidden and glorified by its own transparency, as the accidental and dividuous, in this quiet and harmonious object, is subjected to the life and light of nature which shines in it, even as the transmitted power, love, and wisdom of God, over all fills, and shines through nature! But what the plant is—by an act not its own—and unconsciously—that must thou *make* thyself to *become!* Must by prayer, and by a watchful and unresisting spirit, join at least with the preventive and assisting grace to make thyself, in that light of conscience which inflameth not, and with that knowledge which puffeth not up." The review in which this passage is denounced as "laborious foolery," has been attributed to Haslett. It was endorsed by Jeffrey at any rate, and it bears evident marks of his revision, although stamped by a power greater than his. It was a prime article with him that all his reviewing *corps diplomatique* should hate what he chose to denominate the Lake School of Poetry. The whole of that reviewing craft in the treatment of our Poet and his Circle remind us constantly of the chorus in the best known of all Grecian Comedies:

"Brekekekex, coäx coäx,
Brekekekex, coäx coäx,
Ye marshy children of the lake,
Let us of social hymns partake—
The tuneful sounding strain.
(Coäx coäx.)

The families of Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth appear to have been intimately connected together, and indeed they were not only bound together by the congenial characters of the three poets, but by relationship. It is remarkable that three such men should have been, not merely contemporaries, but residents for so long a period within a few miles of each other. It is scarcely extraordinary that they should have been ranked together in the general denomination of the Lake Poets; and yet their writings are quite unlike. The lake poets are most alike in their solitary and recluse life; their devotion to the study of man, and nature, and human

Which round Nysæan Bacchus sprung
From Jupiter, by us is sung
In Limnæ's wide domain.
Brekekekex coäx coäx.
For we, the lyric muses care,
And horned Pan's affection share;
And ever in the sunny day,
Through the cyperus as we stray,
Beneath the water's dark abyss,
In dance of varied figures move,
Responsive to the bubble's hiss.
Brekekekex coäx coäx.
Yes, we throughout the day will bawl,
Wide as our throat can gape and call—
Brekekekex coäx coäx."

—Wheelwright's Aristophanes.

This is very happily and appropriately descriptive of the notes raised by Jeffrey and his company to drown the music of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Who cares for Jeffrey's opinion now—and spite of the croaking of the frogs of the Edinburgh, Wordsworth and Coleridge have been, and are a power over the mind of England.

life, and entire abandonment for books or contemplation, of the gay world, of fantastic and civic frivolity. Unlike in much beside, they were alike in the serious regards they turned to literature and its avocations. Literature to Jeffrey and the Jeffrey School, was an amusement; he toyed with her as with a beautiful girl, claiming his admiration, but not his devotion; but to Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, literature was a wife; their regards were the sacred and serious regards of marriage, and a love not the less because strengthened and confirmed by conscience and duty. They were all able to look on the serious side of life, and to ponder deeply the lessons taught by the spiritual aspects of nature, they were all versed in the "wisdom and spirit of the universe," and all saw the spiritual, gleaming through the robes of the material. They used thought and imagination as lenses for discovering hidden worlds of beauty, and felt the awful presence that sounds and "rolls through all things;" this was the case with each, but especially was this the great fact of Wordsworth's life; this was the constant burden and enchantment of his being. He too could say with the German, two things constantly fill my soul, "The starry heavens above me, and the moral law within."* What

* "Two things there are, which, the oftener and the more steadfastly we consider, fill the mind with an ever new, an ever rising admiration and reverence,—*the Starry Heaven above, the Moral Law within.* Of neither am I compelled to seek out the existence, as shrouded in obscurity, or only to surmise the possibility, as beyond the hemisphere of my knowledge. Both I contemplate lying clear before me, and connect both immediately with the consciousness of my being.—The one departs from

are all his writings but a constant perception of the sublimities, without in their relation to those within the soul.

Coleridge was much more the Poet of Science than Wordsworth. Wordsworth had no eye or mind for Science, he did not look at nature through the glass of science; optic tubes and prisms, mathematical calculations, and anatomical dissections he had no eye or mind for; in this he differed greatly from his mighty contemporary, Goethe. Both of these men were ever educating themselves, as Carlyle has drawn the comparison, no men

the place I occupy in the outer world of sense; expands, beyond the limits of imagination, that connection of my being with worlds rising above worlds, and systems blending into systems; and protends it also to the illimitable times of their periodic movement—to its commencement and continuance.—The other departs from my individual self, from my personality; and represents me in a world, truly infinite indeed, but whose infinity is to be fathomed only by the intellect, with which also my connection, unlike the fortuitous relation I stand in to the world of sense, I am compelled to recognise, as necessary and universal.—In the former, the first view of a countless multitude of worlds annihilates, as it were, my importance as *an animal nature*, which, after a brief and incomprehensible endowment with the powers of life, is compelled to refund its constituent matter to the planet—itself an atom in the universe—on which it grew.—The aspect of the other, on the contrary, elevates my worth as *an intelligence*, even to infinitude; and this through my personality, in which the moral law reveals a faculty of life independent of my animal nature, nay of the whole material world:—at least, if it be permitted to infer as much from the regulation of my being, which a conformity with that law exacts; proposing, as it does, my moral worth for the absolute end of my activity, conceding no compromise of its imperative to a necessitation of nature, and spurning in its infinity the limits and conditions of my present transitory life."—KANT, AS QUOTED BY SIR W. HAMILTON.—*Dissertations*, pp. 301—302.

ever, more constantly educated themselves, but in Goethe the perpetual hovering on detail prevented the enlarged generalization, and in Wordsworth the perpetual attention to wholes hindered the perception of necessary and even beautiful details; this is true, notwithstanding the many exceptions which may be alleged to the verdict in either instance; in many things it may be said that Wordsworth reached, as such minds will reach, results without going through the intermediate parts of the analysis. He did not dissect thought with the same degree of keen analysis with which he dissected feeling, and here again lay a distinction between him and the great German Poet. Pantheism is not a generalization, it is the result of looking at things in their littleness, and perceiving them to be beings in themselves rather than parts of beings; there is an intimate connection between Science and Pantheism, because Science is process and not result—it is painful process too. Wordsworth's mind lacked the hardness essential to a man of science; we can see his sensibility shuddering at the placing a leaf of a common flower on a microscopic pin. How could it be other with such a faith as his (?).

> "*The opening buds* spread out their fan
> To catch the breezy air;
> *And I must think, do all I can,*
> *That there was pleasure there.*"

He could not have gone from wood to wood seeking for specimens for an entomological museum; he could not have beheld with pleasure the insect's wing rent from

its body, or its body speared on the sharp needle point; he no doubt had sternness, but not hardness of soul; inflexibility and fearlessness he had, but he had not that power so necessary to the man who would obtain dominion over his fellows either in the field, the state, or the scientific arena, of insensibility. This is a side of Wordsworth's character from which Goethe looks larger and higher, and this is claimed for him from his disciples, but in reality is it so? The Scientific Character itself is a mark not of the highest but rather of the lower order of mind; unless it be associated with a breadth of generalization equal to its power of dissection, unless its synthetic, be equal to its analytic strength. It is not taking the watch to pieces, but the reverse that shows the watchmaker.

To found a claim to greatness on the possession of a scientific character alone, is all one, as if the excellence of the human eye were to be judged by its power to see through spectacles. It is greatest to see without the glasses of science; meantime we will be grateful to those men whose persevering patience and plodding power aid the infirmities of humanity, assist its vision, and help it to arrive at results. Let it not be said that Wordsworth was inferior because not the Poet of Science; it was not necessary that he should be. He was too reverent, too habitually religious—he lived too constantly beneath the dome of awe, and wonder, and love. Why should the man entranced with rapture and adoration in the great building, take the glass from his pocket to examine the composition of its stone or

brick, minute observation which aids the inferior mind, intercepts and impairs the vision of the superior. Coleridge had the scientific or analytic faculty in a very extraordinary degree, but he took to pieces with that wonderful analysis the most lofty generalizations of other men, perhaps on earth the celestial mechanics were never before touched by so spiritual a finger; Bohmen, Swedenborg, Kant, Leighton, More, he knew them all, and penetrated beneath the mechanism and frame-work of their thought to the halls from whence flowed their music.

Another neighbour came to add to the circle of Wordsworth's intimate, and ultimately powerful friends. Then wealthy, and mighty in the prodigality of almost Herculean strength, united to a genius fresh and vigorous as that of an Apollo, JOHN WILSON came to Elleray, a beautiful spot close to Rydal; he brought with him an ardent love and veneration for the poet character of Wordsworth; he had been the fellow student of De Quincey at Oxford, and now overflowing with love of nature, and all natural characters and things,—fond of the ancient sports and usages of England and Scotland, he led a life as sportful if not as graceful; he did not conceive that he would soon be called to think of life with far more seriousness of purpose than he contemplated then between the years 1800 and 1810. He fixed his residence amidst the enchantments of the lake scenery, and he did as much as Wordsworth perhaps to make that scenery famous and known throughout the world. Here was a genius as marked and certain as any we

have referred to, and therefore as distinct and individual as any. Never did the Pipe of Pan breathe sweeter strains through the Arcadian Woods of Poetry, than rushed, and sobbed, and wailed, and surged through the English language of glorious John Wilson's prose. The great drawback to his poetry was its very grace; it was too flute-like and soft, the ear asked for the roughness, the break and the pause which frequently led to the charm of his inimitable prose; that prose he wielded well in Wordsworth's service; the pen of Jeffrey was the scratch of a pin compared with the graceful strokes and sweeps of Wilson's pen of iron, and point of diamond. He shortly became the editor of Blackwood, and he made it first in reputation and interest of any periodical press of the world; surrounding himself with humorous and innocent fictions, the admiration and love he awakened by "Maga's" egotism was enthusiastic in that day, and the memory of it lingers with a light of love over the honoured tomb of Christopher North.

Professor Wilson differed in the structure of his mind greatly from both Coleridge and Wordsworth; he was not a metaphysician in the sense in which they were metaphysicians; he was not a poet at all of the same school of heart or thought, indeed he doubtless had more of what we call heart, than either of them; he was much more closely related to Burns—he thrilled more with the pulsations of material and animal nature; he lived nearer to the superstitious spirit that saw in the motions of the forest leaves, and the glory of the

summer cloud, in the waving flag or reed by the mossy pool, and the graceful and drooping lily, or blushing rose, the fairy people of the times of old; his heart was charmed with nature as she lay before him, he did not seek to lift her veil, he did not seek to pervade the universe with the presence of invisible law. He saw nature as an impulse and a sensation, a majesty and a terror, in contradistinction to nature as a thought and an emotion, an infinite obscurity, and an awful unseen.

This is what we see in Wilson's enchanting writings; he walks over moor and mountain; he sails over loch and tarn; he climbs among the waterfalls, and high up among the crags of eagles, like an Apollo; what ease there is in his step, he is not disturbed with a presence behind or before him; the meridian sun has for him no shadow, and the vault above, and the heathery moorland around with its rejoicing streams, and cooing cushats, is only one wide rejoicing world of light. It is strange too that neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth succeeded in raising within him the evil fiend of doubt, to disturb or destroy his peace, but it is so, that style, and those descriptions flash and flow along, the evidences of a rejoicing nature—a brooding, June-tide midday hymn—a picture of a heart reading the world and its glorious beauty, before the shadow flies over the earth, or the blight and the tempest over the cloud.

How various are the Fortunes of the Poets; the reader is no doubt well acquainted with that most admirable Biography, one of the very best in our language, Forster's life of Oliver Goldsmith; a very different picture

does it present to that of the life of the subject of these memoirs; a tender, beautiful spirit, brought into conflict with the harsh, hard, actual world; a life full of adventure, full of variety, a life in London, spent among leading men, men who although men of genius, were accustomed to the world's iron face, and carried about their whole demeanour some portion of the roughness with which they were, or had been treated. The life of Goldsmith reads like the true Romance of life, and his verse rises in all its beauty and power, and pathos, high and clear, although so deep toned, like some sad sweet voice we may hear in the night, in the hum and murmur of the vast and crowded city. The life of a man like Goldsmith is a real human life, begirt with difficulty, error, folly, vanity, sorrow, hope, labour, and triumph and disappointment; we like to read such—it would not be possible to write so interesting and loveable a life of Wordsworth, the materials never did or could exist for such a life; the life of Goldsmith is nearer to us, and therefore dearer to us; his is no life written in his works, although his soul is written there. Wordsworth's life is only interesting on account of his works; we do not feel that it has a great human interest in itself, and that its pathway lay through humanities so deeply and sweetly human, that it is for ever interesting to us and to our race.

But these, his more constant companions were not his only ones; he does not appear often to have left home, and usually for the purpose of an extended tour, the memorials of which are preserved, but such a band of men

as were to be found in the lakes was an attraction. There are many recollections of men who were the poet's established friends, men who belonged themselves to the distinguished hierarchy of letters, thus we find in the year 1805 Humphrey Davy, and Walter Scott, and Wordsworth, ascending Helvellyn together, and it was then they reconnoitered together the scenery of the death of poor Charles Gough, who perished in attempting to cross over Helvellyn to Grasmere, by slipping from a steep part of the rock, where the ice was not thawed, and beside whose remains his faithful dog was found many days afterwards, almost starved to death. Sir Walter and Wordsworth both wrote on this touching circumstance, without either knowing that the other was similarly engaged.

In those days Windermere and its immediate neighbourhood, more secluded as we have seen than now, was more alive frequently with the presence of genius; indeed they have all gone, the men who lent the brilliancy of humanity to nature, and the men who were attracting links to the English mountain region they have all passed away, and only left the memory of their name and their writings to haunt and hallow the spot. Lockhart in his life of Scott has preserved the memory of one such day, a day to which Wilson refers when in his Recreations he says, "The memory of that day returns, when Windermere glittered with all her sails in honor of the great Northern Minstrel, and of him the eloquent, whose lips are now mute in the dust." It was in 1825 Canning was on a visit to Mr. Bolton, at Storrs, a beautiful man-

sion about a mile below Bowness, and Scott was invited to meet him there; Scott spent the preceding night at Elleray, the seat of Professor Wilson, and the next day the two together went to Storrs. "A large company" says Lockhart "had been assembled there in honour of the minister, it included already Mr. Wordsworth. It has not, I suppose often happened to a plain English Merchant, wholly the architect of his own fortune, to entertain at one time a party embracing so many illustrious names; he was proud of his guests, they respected him, and honoured and loved each other, and it would have been difficult to say which star in the constellation shone with the brightest or the softest light. There were beautiful and accomplished women to adorn and enjoy this circle; the weather was as Elysian as the scenery. There were brilliant cavalcades through the woods in the morning, and delicious boatings on the lake by moonlight; and the last day the Admiral of the lake, (a title bestowed on Wilson by Canning) presided over one of the most splendid Regattas that ever enlivened Windermere. Perhaps there were not fewer than fifty barges following in the Professor's radiant procession, when it paused at the point of Storrs, to admit into the place of honor the kind and happy Mr. Bolton and his guests. The bards of the lakes led the cheers that hailed Scott and Canning, and music and sunshine, flags, streamers, and gay dresses, the merry hum of voices, and the rapid splashing of innumerable oars, made up a dazzling mixture of sensations, as the flotilla wound its way among the richly foliaged islands, and along

bays and promontories peopled with enthusiastic spectators."

We do not think of Wordsworth as belonging to the set of London Poets, and he did not; the Edinburgh Review classified that order of Poets of our age, against which it hurled especially the lances and spears of its spite, the Lake School; Blackwood was constantly running a jocular tilt against what it denominated the Cockney School: in the last, the leaders were Leigh Hunt, and Keats, and Barry Cornwall, and Haslett. Wordsworth knew little of them, they were not men he could have felt much union with, but they were a little coterie whose history as a part of the literary history of the London of our day, will look very interesting, when some future John Forster shall, perhaps, undertake the painting of the Life and Times of Charles Lamb, or of Leigh Hunt. Charles Lamb was able with his strong, tender, humorsome soul, to embrace both Schools; he was one of Wordsworth's dearest friends, and Lamb honoured and loved his friend far from London, among the mountains and lakes of the North; and in the earlier part of this century, had you looked into Lamb's quiet chambers, you would have found the poet there, taking his part in one of those happy and unostentatious suppers which Talfourd has so vividly and gracefully described. When he was called by business or pleasure to London, there was a stir in the little circle to receive the recluse with all due honor, and make the occasion the centre of some additional mustering of the clan; this introduces us to another

circle of Wordsworth's friends, men however with whom he did not fraternize much; perhaps Coleridge was the only man with whom he did fraternize; these were men who trod the hard dusty highway of literature, men of undoubted genius, but the hacks of the daily press; the wearied, broken hearted, broken spirited, like Haslett reading whose lives it seems indeed it had been "better had they never been born."

Talfourd has himself painted with the pencil of a master, in his Memorials of Charles Lamb, the scene of many happy convivialities; that cheerful supper table. He lingers most lovingly round the forms seen in that plain room, through the rising mists of memory. We have all read, and read with quickened fancy, Plutarch's Banquet of the Seven Wise Men; that banquet, at which the old Grecian advises us to be careful of our company when we go out to the supper, since if the meats be bad we need not eat them, "and if the wines be bad we need not drink them, but for a weak ill mannered fellow there is no help, he will mar all mirth and music, and spoil the best entertainment in the world." Such evenings and companionships remind one of what a great writer has said of "a supper of parched peas, but enlivened by the converse of the gods;" that is a glorious circle, now entirely broken. In the same day were held the magnificent entertainments of Holland House, when the illustrious Lorenzo the Magnificent of our kingdom and age was wont to gather round him—the genius, the art, and the scholarship of his more mighty Republic of Letters: they have gone. In other times the social historian

of our period, the melodramatist and novelist, who shall depict our age and our metropolis, will portray Samuel Rogers's in St. James's Place, and Holland House, and Lamb's little coterie, as necessary to the literary conception of these times. We like to look at Wordsworth as one sometimes of that circle—and what a circle—every member a monarch in the realms of fancy, imagination, and thought. That heavy man with the wonderful dark blue eye—"Poet, Metaphysician, and Bard"—with that voice so thick and most unmusical, murmuring forth of *om-m*-ject and *sum-m*-ject,* and yet charming, and hushing all voices by thoughts of more than mortal melody;

> "A perpetual air of nectared sweets,
> Where no crude surfeit reigns."

Our great Plato—Coleridge; and then that quick glancing, active being, passionate, splenetic, with the eye quickly glancing behind the spectacles, and his mass of rich white hair, poet and artist, too lightly esteemed, he has just slipped in, and even now is relating the anecdote of the writ served on him to-day, and how the sheriff's officer, left alone with his unfinished painting of Christ raising Lazarus, is, on his return, found standing horrified before the rising ghostly man. "My — Sir, I can't take you. Sir,—Sir, I can't take you." Wonderful compliment to genius;† on which some wicked wag jocularly sings from the corner,

* See Carlyle's Life of Sterling. † Life of R. B. Haydon.

"Now let us drink that bailiff's health,
Drink it in three times three,
And when I'm served with an arrest,
May that man come to me."

Poor Haydon; and there is Haslett, quiet and critical, but to-night quite ready for any attack, and *only waiting to spring* with agile force on the first that offers to debate; and there is the Host, that sad face, yet lip so laughing although so secretively compressed, that you too are compelled to catch the infection of that seriously, sadly, merry smile. He is stammering out puns with wisdom as well as wit in every one of them—our English Jean Paul; and yonder see his quiet, lovely, most innocent sister, he and she actors in a tragedy so deep and awful; now so living for each other, so necessary to each others happiness. And there is Barnes, and George Dyer, and yonder William Godwin, with a head so full of speculations and wild unearthly dreamings and imaginings that he has done his best to frighten every propriety on English ground from its centre; and there is Talfourd, not one to keep or even set the table in a roar, yet tender, wise, and eloquent; his serene face, and blue eye, apparently rather those of a listener than a talker, this is his circle, and in very graceful and elegant language he has painted that circle.*

With this motley literary group of toiled and weary strugglers among the stern and terrible realities of a

* See Talfourd's Final Memorials of Charles Lamb.

life in London, Wordsworth could not have much sympathy. But he is in London on an occasional visit, and is the magnet who has drawn together an extraordinary number to the supper table to-night, but saying little, and sounding his march too stately and high for this merry party, whose lives are not spent among still lakes and quiet solemn mountains, but in the rude shock and collision of business; and who this evening are drinking for once the Champagne of Life after its bitter drugs and seem perhaps to the recluse too reckless in their gaiety; these Men of Action supping with him, the Man of Contemplation.

Of that circle *there is not one left, Talfourd was the last.* He could say with the Host in those pathetic lines, after that Host's departure;

> "I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
> Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies,
> *All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.*
> So let us talk of the old familiar faces,
> How some have died, some they have left me,
> And some are taken from me; all are departed,
> *All, all, are gone, the old familiar faces.*

It is certainly remarkable to notice how, in the life of Wordsworth, all the good things fortune had to bestow, fell at his feet gradually as his career and his family increased; gifts, legacies, bequests, government places, and pensions, found their way to him. We, perhaps, should not feel so much complacency beneath these showers of good fortune; for we do not like to see the sons of genius too fortunate; but

Wordsworth has shown us that he could nobly and contentedly bear poverty. He never at any period of his life had any hesitation in alluding to his once straitened circumstances. "Money was scarce with me when I bought it," said he once to the writer, as he took down a volume of the standard Poets, the conversation having led to some remarks on the unworthiness of the edition. Mr. De Quincey has alluded in a strain of banter, which we hope is good humoured, on the invariable well-doing of Wordsworth in worldly circumstances;

After enumerating a succession of these pieces of good fortune, Mr. De Quincey says—"fourthly, some worthy uncle of Mrs. Wordsworth's was pleased to betake himself to a better world; leaving to various nieces, and especially to Mrs. W., something or other, I forget what, but it was expressed by thousands of pounds. At this moment Wordsworth's family had begun to increase; and the worthy old uncle, like everybody else in Wordsworth's case, finding his property clearly 'wanted,' and as people would tell him 'bespoke,' felt how very indelicate it would look for him to stay any longer, and so he moved off. But Wordsworth's family, and the wants of that family, still continued to increase; and the next person, being the fifth, who stood in the way, and must, therefore, have considered himself rapidly growing into a nuisance, was the Stamp-Distributor for the County of Westmoreland. About March, 1814, I think it was, that this very comfortable situation was vacated. Probably it took a month for the news to reach him; because in April, and not before, feeling that he had

received a proper notice to quit, he, good man—this Stamp-Distributor—like all the rest, distributed himself and his offices into two different places,—the latter falling, of course, into the hands of Wordsworth.

"This office, which it was Wordsworth's pleasure to speak of as a *little* one, yielded, I believe, somewhere about £500 a year. Gradually even that, with all former sources of income, became insufficient; which ought not to surprise anybody; for a son at Oxford, as a gentleman-commoner, could spend at least £300 per annum; and there were other children. Still it is wrong to say, that it had become insufficient; as usual it had not come to that; but, on the first symptoms arising that it would soon come to that, somebody, of course, had notice to consider himself a sort of nuisance elect,—and in this case it was the Distributor of Stamps for the County of Cumberland."

Dr. Southey, Wordsworth's ancient friend, the Poet Laureate, died on the 21st of March, 1843, and on the 31st of that month he received a letter from the Earl De La Warr, who then filled the office of Lord Chamberlain, informing him that the Queen had signified her wish that he should accept the vacant office. But he was at that time seventy-four years of age, and he feared that the situation might involve duties he could neither fulfil nor undergo; and he declined the appointment. The Lord Chamberlain however urged the matter in a very kind tone, and Sir Robert Peel joined with him in the wish in terms so truly kind that we must quote his letter:

"Whitehall, April 3, 1843.

"My Dear Sir,

"I hope you may be induced to reconsider your decision with regard to the appointment of Poet Laureate.

"The offer was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain, with my entire concurrence, not for the purpose of imposing on you any onerous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay you that tribute of respect justly due to the first of living poets.

"The Queen entirely approved of the nomination, and there is one unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal (and it is pretty generally known) that there could not be a question about the selection.

"Do not be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing required from you.

"But as the Queen can select for this honourable appointment, no one whose claims for respect and honour on account of eminence as a poet can be placed in competition with yours; I trust you will not longer hesitate to accept it.

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"With sincere esteem,

"Most faithfully yours,

"Robert Peel."

"I write this from my place in the House of Commons."

Thus urged, the aged Poet's doubts and difficulties were overcome, and "the laureate wreath was twined round his silver hair."

To return to other thoughts, Wordsworth like Milton was a Politician as well as a Poet, not one of all our great poets has more decidedly interfused his politics into his poetry than he. He cannot either, as Milton can, be divided into two characters, the man as he represents himself to us in action, and the man of contemplation. We never think of the author of "Paradise Lost" when we read the "Areopagitica," or of the "Defence of the People of England," when we read "Paradise Regained;" but although there are many of the poems of Wordsworth in which the Citizen does not appear, yet on the whole we find his political doctrines scattered over all his volumes. We are met it must seem, by very amazing contradictions here, yet they are what from the nature of his genius we might expect. Yet his early faith of Republican Ardour, is very much the same as his later faith of Aristocratic Despotism; both resulted from that tendency we have noticed in his mind to look at things in their synthetic aspect. It must be said after all, that he was a man of Idealizations and Abstractions, greatly like Milton in this, he could not see principles in their relation to the hour, and to the present generation, yet he very nobly says in a letter to Lord Lonsdale, "It has ever been the habit of my mind to trust that expediency will come out of fidelity to principles, rather than to seek my principles of action in calculations of expediency."

Thus, beyond most political writings we could mention, his political poems deserve the name of Ethical; he belonged to that noble order of minds whose views aid us to discover how far our principles are advancing to, or receding from the highest conceptions of right; they rectify ideas of duty; they ennoble and crown moral heroism; what exhilarating and animating principles may be found spread over his writings, forming a perfect code for the conduct of Statesmen; you might deduce his doctrines and expand them into an essay, and call it "The Prince," but it would be the very opposite of the celebrated treatise of that name of Macchiavelli, for everywhere he insists on soundness of the moral heart as the most indispensable requisite of states desirous for their health and perpetuity. Hearken to these trumpet blasts wherewith he was wont to speak encouragement to the strugglers for Truth and Freedom; thus he speaks in the sight of the coast of France from England in time of war,

> "Even so doth God protect us, if we be
> Virtuous and wise. Winds blow and waters roll,
> Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity,
> Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
> Spake laws to them and said that by the soul
> Only the Nations shall be great and free."

He does not therefore in his Sonnets or his Poems in general, eulogize, as has been the fashion of the age, its wealth, he does not indulge in strains of rapture, on account even of our progress in art, in science, and civilization, and education; he fears lest the price paid for

even these should be too high; nothing can compensate to him for the loss of Natural Independence—the Freedom of the Soul.—To him our language and our history breathes and glows with great words and heroic deeds.

> "In our Hall is hung
> Armoury of the invincible knights of old:
> We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakspeare spake; the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
> Of earth's best blood, have titles manifold."

He dreads luxury as the most insidious and certain of all foes. Riches are not to be despised in themselves, but riches, made the test of worth, and power, and elevation in a state sap the foundations of the kingdom they may help to support, and therefore he, though only transitorily, expressed the fear, that as luxury had before "tamed great nations," and that the exchange of the sword for the ledger, and the bower of the student for the counter of the merchant, had weakened in ancient days, so possibly now amidst the rise of manufactories on every hand, and the thronging life of great cities throughout our age and country: and although those fears were conquered, yet he could not avoid pouring forth the salutary warning and invocation,—

> "Never be it ours
> To see the sun how brightly it will shine,
> And know that noble feelings, manly powers,
> Instead of gathering strength must droop and pine,
> And earth with all her pleasant fruits and flowers
> Fade and participate in man's decline."

And therefore, his just appreciation of military prowess, which he made to take a very inferior rank among the constituents of a nation's greatness, in his Sonnets.

"The power of armies is a visible thing;"

And again,

"The martial courage of a day is vain."

It is not by these or such as these that a nation can retain its place, and its nobility. This is a theme on which Wordsworth never wearies to speak, the building up the moral power of the people; and his words, especially in his Sonnets, fly forth like words of inspiration, now launching them in denunciation—now fire tipped darting them forth to transfix errors or characters—now mounting like a blast and breathing animating and cheerful words to despairing peoples—now shooting like a withering burning bolt against the creaking despotisms and rotting tyrannies of his age—and now cold, clear, calm in placid axiom, or philosophic meditation, setting forth wisdom to statesmen on their domestic policy, or to the people on their social usage and their influence on their country's destiny.

Thus while he lived so retired and away from the world's great seats of noise and confusion, he did not neglect the duties of a citizen; he thought, and expressed his thoughts upon most of the passing subjects of the day. His views were opposed to those which were triumphantly endorsed upon the statute books of

the country. He opposed energetically the Catholic Relief Bill, as a measure certainly likely to endanger the liberties and constitution of England. He regarded the removal of Romish disabilities as a certain prelude to the domination of the Papacy in England; and while the upholders of the Relief Bill spoke of civil liberty, and thought of it alone, he believed they were in reality aiding the cause of spiritual despotism.—He opposed the formation of the Bible Society, in common with his eminent brother Dr. Christopher Wordsworth, whose high church predelictions we suspect often gave a tone to those opinions of the Poet, which were connected with Citizenship and Public Life. He believed that the formation of the Bible Society would increase the number of sects, and weaken the power, influence, and resources of the Established Church.

But the question on which he spoke most, and most audibly and plainly was that of Education; and here his views were a mingling of wisdom, and as it seems to us of error, especially arising from his residence in so isolated a neighbourhood, and his slight acquaintance with the busy affairs of the great active world, in the Age of Great Cities. The mistake which he made resulted from the peculiar formation of his genius, his tendency to abstraction, a constant survey of man as one, and as a whole; hence he was right in his premises, but he made no allowances for the influences of the times, for the influence of strong popular and undisciplined will, in places where the mighty masses gathered and congregated together. He looked at the Educational

Question too much from its relation merely to Rydal Village.

Still the opinions of the Poet on the Education of the People should be regarded with some interest; although we see in this, as in other matters, there is the appearance of a mind delighting too much to survey things in their abstract qualities; it may be thought that different periods of his life present different views on this question. There is a noble passage in the Excursion often cited.

> "Oh for the coming of that glorious time,
> When prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
> And best protection; this imperial realm,
> While she exacts allegiance shall admit
> An obligation on her part to teach;
> Binding herself by statute, to secure
> For all the children whom her soil maintains,
> The rudiments of letters."

But in no sense was Wordsworth an apostle of education; his opinions and convictions ran counter to very much that passes under the name of education, and yet we believe that in the main he was wholly right; all that favoured the cultivation of the moral feelings, all that tended to call into active play the imagination and fancy, and the reasoning powers duly balanced and harmonized by these,—to all this he was favourable, but he was an enemy to all merely mechanical education. We believe that ever since his day a great improvement has taken place in these things, and a greater still is taking place. There was, some time since too

great a tendency to reverence intellect and intellectual attainments for their own sake, we believe that day is passing. It is to this he alludes, when he says, "It is with the mind as with the body; I recollect seeing a German babe stuffed with beer and beef who had the appearance of an Infant Hercules. *He* might have enough in him of the old Tuetonic blood to grow up to a strong man; but tens of thousands would perish after such unreasonable cramming. Now I cannot but think that the like would happen with our modern pupils, if the views of the patrons of these schools were realised. The diet they offer is not the natural diet for infant and juvenile minds. The faculties are overstrained, and not exercised with that simultaneous operation which ought to be aimed at as far as is practicable. Natural history is taught in infant schools by pictures stuck up against walls, and such mummery. A moment's notice of a redbreast pecking by a winter's hearth is worth it all."* It is very sad to see a man like Wordsworth quite misunderstanding what he is writing about, and to quote his own splendid figure,

> "Tilting with a straw
> Against a champion cased in adamant."

It is clear that Wordsworth would give to the children of the nobility and the higher classes these pieces of knowledge, he would only deny them to the people, under the idea that they were unfitted for their reception.

* Life, vol. II. p. 186.

Speaking of the education of girls, he says:—"I will back Shenstone's 'Schoolmistress' by her winter fire, and in her summer garden seat, against all Dr. Bell's sour-looking teachers in petticoats. What is the use of pushing on the education of girls so fast, and moving by the stimulus of Emulation, who, to say nothing worse of her, is cousin-german to Envy? What are you to do with these girls? What demand is there for the ability that they may have prematurely acquired? Will they not be indisposed to bend to any kind of hard labour or drudgery? And yet many of them must submit to it, or go wrong. The mechanism of the Bell System is not required in small places; praying after the *fugleman*, is not like praying at a mother's knee. The Bellites overlook the difference: they talk about moral discipline, but wherein does it encourage the imaginative feelings? in short, what she practically understands is of little amount, and too apt to become the slave of the bad passions. I dislike *display* in everything; above all in education. . . . The old dame (Shenstone's) did not affect to make theologians and logicians, but she taught to read, and she practised the memory, often no doubt by rote, but still the faculty was improved; something perhaps she explained, but trusted the *rest* to parents and masters, and to the pastor of the parish. I am sure as good daughters, as good servants, as good mothers and wives, were brought up at that time as now, when the world is so much less humble-minded. A hand full of employment, and a head not above it, with such principles and habits as may be acquired *without* the Madras machine,

are the best security for the chastity of wives of the lower rank."

He says "one of the most innocent, contented, happy, and in his sphere most useful men I know, can neither read nor write." So we may also say, but we are also compelled to say, the more the pity. Such men are not happy, innocent, or useful, because they can neither read nor write. But perhaps the presentation of these quotations may put the views of the distinguished writer in a somewhat unfair aspect; we can scarcely believe that the impressions we may have conveyed hitherto are those he intended to convey to the mind. "The wisest among us," he said, "expect too much from school teaching." And this was most true when education began to be talked of, at the beginning of the present century, there was too much reliance on mental adroitness—on intellectual gladiatorship and mechanics, and the whole being, especially the heart and moral nature were not sufficiently the objects of culture.

Education no doubt occupied the mind of the poet much, and as we have said, his views in the main were worthy of deep thought, for *he* had given them deep thought; he feared to follow

> "The purblind guide expediency. Elate with view
> Of what is won, we overlook or scorn
> The best that should keep pace with it, and must,
> Else more and more the general mind will droop,
> Even as if bent on perishing. There lives
> No faculty within us which the soul
> Can spare; and humblest earthly Weal demands
> For dignity, not placed beyond her reach,

Zealous co-operation of all means
Given or acquired, to raise us from the mire,
And liberate our hearts from low pursuits.
By gross Utilities enslaved, we need—
More of ennobling impulse from the past;
If to the future aught of good must come
Sounder, and therefore holier than the ends,
Which, in the giddiness of self-applause,
We covet as supreme; *O grant the crown*
That wisdom wears, or take the treacherous staff
From knowledge." *

The most of Wordsworth's views on Education revolved round the two ideas, first, that it should not be forced. "There is," said he "an officious disposition on the part of the upper and middle classes to precipitate the tendency of the people towards intellectual culture, in a manner subversive of their own happiness, dangerous to the peace of Society." † He was afraid of charity. "Their attainments are likely to turn to better account where they are not gratuitously lavished, and where either the parents and connections are possessed of certain property which enables them to procure the instruction for their children, or where, by their frugality and other serious and self-denying habits, they contribute as far as they can to benefit their offspring in this way." ‡

The second principle in Wordsworth's ideas of Education was that all should be reared on a basis of Religion. "I will grant you that a religious faculty is the eye of the soul, but if we would have successful soul

* Musings near Aquapendente. Poems, vol. VI.
† Life, vol. II. p. 193. 1830. ‡ Life, vol. II. p. 190. 1828.

oculists, not merely that organ, but the general anatomy and constitution of the intellectual frame must be studied, for the powers of that eye are affected by the general state of the system; my meaning is, that piety and religion will be best understood by him who takes the most comprehensive view of the human mind, and that for the most part they will strengthen with the general strength of the mind, and that this is best promoted by a due mixture of direct and indirect nourishment and discipline."*

In the year 1836 Mr. Wordsworth laid the foundation of a new School Room at Bowness, on Windermere; the Schools were built by the munificence of John Bolton, Esq., of Storrs, who had then completed his eightieth year, and delegated to Mr. Wordsworth the task and the honor of commencing the building. His speech on

* "I deem any plan of national education, in a country like ours, most difficult to apply in practice. In Switzerland, or Sweden, or Norway, or France, or Spain, or anywhere but in Great Britain, it would be comparatively easy. Heaven and Hell are scarcely more different from each other than Sheffield and Manchester, &c. differ from the plains and valleys of Surrey, Essex, Cumberland, and Westmoreland. We have mighty cities and towns of all sizes, with villages and cottages scattered everywhere. We are mariners, miners, manufacturers, in tens of thousands traders, husbandmen, everything. What form of discipline, what book or doctrine, I will not say would equally suit all these; but which if happily suited for one would not perhaps be an absolute nuisance in another? The lotteries and distilleries are a standing record that government cares nothing for the morals of the people and that all which they want is their money. But wisdom and justice are the only true sources of the revenue of a people; preach this and you may not preach in vain."—*Letter to Archdeacon Wrangham.* 1808.

that occasion was lengthy, and was an exposition of his views of Education in general.

There can be no doubt that the period to which we are most indebted in the life of the poet, is the earlier; with a few slight exceptions all the poems which are our charm, and our delight, are the productions of his first years; we will not, like Jeffrey, insolently insinuate that the possession of a place in the Stamp Office affected the productions of his genius; but there is a difference in his later productions, his mind appeared to lose its boldness—the grand and awful abandonment of manner which so characterises his first poems; in his later writings he does not appear to move so freely among the sublimities and inner seclusions of nature; the lessons he wrote on objects were more actual, and easily read; they were not those awful hieroglyphic sighs which thrill us on the perusal of his first volumes. Occasionally the old sacred fire blazed forth, and we will refer to several instances; but after his fortieth year his works develop more grace, and less grandeur; perhaps the reason for this is twofold, there was a change in the face of Europe.

Since that day he did not write as he wrote when Europe was echoing the tramping hoof of the mighty Corsican Soldier through her most ancient Palaces and venerable Temples; when high over all sounds rose the shrill shriek of invaded cities, and dying peoples. And there was a change in his own circumstances; he had been well treated by life—he had been fostered and

cared for by providence, the pressure of strong anxieties had been removed from him. Within, the history of his mind seems to be on the whole retrograde; without, the history of his life and his worldly circumstances were those of perfect prosperity and peace. His mind and his life alike appear to have settled into a perfect calm.

Very few eminent poets have written of Woman so coldly as Wordsworth; some have made this a ground of impeachment against him. But it must also be admitted that scarcely any poet has written of woman with so much delicacy and grace—so much modesty and reverence. Woman in the eye of Wordsworth always seemed to be invested with qualities kindling

"Awful modesties."

This we have already seen. His love appears to have been mostly for an abstract and beautiful idealization of his own mind.

"*She* loves her fire, her cottage home,
Yet o'er the moorland will she roam
In weather rough and bleak;
And when against the wind she strains
Oh! might I kiss the mountain rains
That sparkle on *her* cheek."

One of his most finished idealizations—*if* indeed it be an idealization—for all the series of verses which may

be denominated "Lucy" looks painfully and affectingly real—is that commencing

"Three years she grew in sun and shower."

The Darling of Nature—the Lady of Nature's making; in whom nature was to be both law and impulse; who with nature in all places, the rock, the plain, the eye fixed on heaven, the step bounding over earth, in the glade, in the bower, was to find in her ever by Nature's own dictation the kindling or the restraining energy of her being; sportive, bounding in wild glee across the lawn, or springing up the mountain side, or hushed into silence amidst the awful calm and brooding hush of all things. To her the floating clouds revealed their majesty, the willow its grace, the storm its deeper teachings of beauty or of terror. Dear to her the stars of midnight, and the dance of wayward rivulets, warbling their murmuring sounds, causing

"Beauty born of their murmurings
To pass into her face."

"Thus nature spake—The work was done,
How soon my Lucy's race was run;
She died and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene,
The memory of what has been—
And never more will be"

It is difficult to believe that this touching portrait and deep tone of pathos are only the children of the fancy. That he had the power to paint woman in her most

attractive graces of feature and form, cannot be doubted by those who have read the "Three Cottage Girls;" * and perhaps some may think still more descriptively powerful, "The Highland Girl," which is remarkable too as showing that while the Poet possessed so fully the power to paint female loveliness, it occurred to him mostly in connection with feelings—as cold and pure as a mountain lake.

But his most ambitious portrait of Female Loveliness is in the Poem called "The Triad," a piece in honour of Miss Coleridge, Miss Southey, and his own daughter Dora. He paints them as the Three Graces, he had often promised these fair beings in a joke to send them down to immortality in his verses. He has done it—in what has been called "something finer than the most vivid sculpture." We are not told by the Poet for whom he intended the portraits; doubtless the ladies knew. De Quincey has disclosed the secret of the likenesses. He is confident of the beauty and the worth of the Heroines. He exclaims

> "Show me the noblest youth of present time
> Whose trembling fancy would to love give birth,
> Some god or hero from the Olympian clime
> Returned to seek a consort upon earth;
> Or, in no doubtful prospect, let me see
> The brightest star of ages yet to be,
> And I will mate and match him blissfully."

The Poet will not fetch a Naiad from the flood, or a

* Works, vol. IV., p. 160.

Dryad from the leafy forest, nor a Sea Nymph from her coral bowers. No

> "Mere mortals, bodied forth in vision still,
> Shall, with Mount Idas, triple lustre fill—
> The chaster coverts of a British hill;
> Appear! Obey my lyre's command,
> Come, like the graces, hand in hand,
> For ye, though not by birth allied,
> Are sisters in the bonds of love."

The pines have hushed their waving, a peerless youth stands by the Poet's side expectant, asking the clouds, looking to the earth and to the vacant air; at last one by one the ladies approach. The first Grace is understood to be Miss Southey.

> "Fear not a constraining measure!
> —Yielding to this gentle spell,
> Lucida! from domes of pleasure,
> Or from cottage-sprinkled dell,
> Come to regions solitary,
> Where the eagle builds her aery,
> Above the hermit's long-forsaken cell!
> —She comes!—behold
> That figure, like a ship with silver sail!
> Nearer she draws; a breeze uplifts her veil;
> Upon her coming wait
> As pure a sunshine and as soft a gale
> As e'er, on herbage-covering earthly mold,
> Tempted the bird of Juno to unfold
> His richest splendour,—when his veering gait
> And every motion of his starry train,
> Seem governed by a strain
> Of music, audible to him alone."

And then we have a picture of the lady:—

> "*worthy of earth's proudest throne!*
> *Nor less, by excellence of nature, fit*
> *Beside an unambitious hearth to sit*
> *Domestic queen, where grandeur is unknown;*
> What living man could fear
> The worst of fortune's malice, wer't thou near,
> Humbling that lily stem, thy sceptre meek,
> That its fair flowers may brush from off his cheek
> Brush the too happy tear?
> —*Queen, and handmaid lowly!*
> *Whose skill can speed the day with lively cares,*
> *And banish melancholy*
> By all that mind invents, or hand prepares;
> O thou, against whose lip, without its smile
> And in its silence even, no heart is proof;
> Whose goodness, sinking deep, would reconcile
> The softest nursling of a gorgeous palace
> To the bare life beneath the hawthorn roof
> Of Sherwood's Archer, or in caves of Wallace—
> Who that hath seen thy beauty could content
> His soul with but a *glimpse* of heavenly day?
> *Who that hath loved thee, but would lay*
> *His strong hand on the wind, if it were bent*
> *To take thee in thy majesty away?*
> Pass onward (even the glancing deer
> Till we depart intrude not here;)
> That mossy slope, o'er which the woodbine throws
> A canopy, is smooth'd for thy repose!"

The next lady he invokes before the astonished youth is his own daughter—Dora

> "Come, if the notes thine ear may pierce,
> Come youngest of the lovely three,

Submissive to the mighty verse
And the dear voice of harmony,
By none more deeply felt than thee!
I sang; and lo! from pastimes virginal
She hastens to the tents
Of Nature, and the lonely elements.
Air sparkles round her with a dazzling sheen;
And mark, her glowing cheek, her vesture green!
And, as if wishful to disarm
Or to repay the potent charm,
She bears the stringèd lute of old romance,
That cheered the trellissed arbour's privacy,
And soothed war-wearied knights in raftered hall.
How vivid, yet how delicate, her glee!
So tripped the muse, inventress of the dance;
So, truant in waste woods, the blithe Euphrosyne!"

"But the ringlets of that head,
Why are they ungarlanded?
Why bedeck her temples less
Than the simplest shepherdess?
Is it not a brow inviting
Choicest flowers that ever breathed,
Which the myrtle would delight in,
With Idalian rose enwreathed?
But her humility is well content
With *one* wild floweret (call it not forlorn)—
FLOWER OF THE WINDS—beneath her bosom worn—
Yet more for love than ornament."

"Open, ye thickets! let her fly,
Swift as a Thracian nymph, o'er field and height!
For she, to all but those who love her, shy,
Would gladly vanish from a Stranger's sight;
Though where she is beloved, and loves,
Light as the wheeling butterfly she moves;
Her happy spirit as a bird is free,

That rifles blossoms on a tree,
Turning them inside out, with arch audacity.

"Alas! how little can a moment show
Of an eye where feeling plays,
In ten thousand dewy rays;
A face o'er which a thousand shadows go!—
—She stops—is fastened to that rivulet's side;
And there (while, with sedater mien,
O'er timid waters that have scarcely left
Their birthplace in the rocky cleft,
She bends) at leisure may be seen
Features to old ideal grace allied,
Amid their smiles and dimples dignified—
Fit countenance for the soul of primal truth;
The bland composure of eternal youth!

What more changeful than the sea?
But over his great tides
Fidelity presides;
And this light-hearted maiden constant is as he.
High is her aim, as heaven above,
And wide as ether her good will;
And like the lowly reed, her love
Can drink its nurture from the scantiest rill:
Insight as keen as frosty star
Is to her charity no bar,
Nor interrupts her frolic graces
When she is far from these wild places,
Encircled by familiar faces.

O the charm that manners draw,
Nature, from thy genuine law!
If from what her hand would do
Her voice would utter, aught ensue
Untoward or unfit;
She in benign affections pure
In self-forgetfulness, secure,

Sheds round the transient harm, or vague mischance
A light unknown to tutored elegance:
Her's is not a cheek shame-stricken,
But her blushes, are joy-flushes;
And the fault, if fault it be,
Only ministers to quicken
Laughter-loving gaiety,
And kindle sportive wit—
Leaving this daughter of the mountains free
As if she knew that Oberon, king of faery
Had crossed her purpose with some quaint vagary,
And heard his viewless bands
Over their mirthful triumph clapping hands."

In this portrait the reader perhaps will think he detects the most laboured finish, bestowed on the darling of the father's heart.

And now for Miss Coleridge:—

"Last of the three, though eldest born,
Reveal thyself, like pensive morn
Touched by the skylark's earliest note,
Ere humbler gladness be afloat.
But whether in the semblance drest
Of Dawn, or Eve, fair vision of the west,
Come, with each anxious hope subdued
By woman's gentle fortitude,
Each grief, through meekness, settling into rest.
—Or I would hail thee when some high-wrought page
Of a closed volume, lingering in thine hand,
Has raised thy spirit to a peaceful stand
Among the glories of a happier age."

And, behold! she is here:—

"Her brow hath opened on me—see it there,
Brightening the umbrage of her hair;

So gleams the crescent moon, that loves
To be descried through shady groves.
Tenderest bloom is on her cheek;
Wish not for a richer streak;
Nor *dread the depth of meditative eye;*
But let thy love, upon that azure field
Of thoughtfulness and beauty, yield
Its homage offered up in purity.
What would'st thou more? In sunny glade,
Or under leaves of thickest shade,
Was such a stillness e'er diffused
Since earth grew calm while angels mused?
Softly she treads, as if her foot were loth
To crush the mountain dew-drop—soon to melt,
On the flower's breast; *as if she felt*
That flowers themselves, what'er their hue,
With all their fragrance, all their glistening,
Call to the heart for inward listening—
And tho' for bridal wreaths and tokens true
Welcomed wisely; though a growth
Which the careless shepherd sleeps on,
As fitly spring from turf the mourner weeps on—
And without wrong are cropped the marble tomb to strew."

And now the charm is over;

——"the mute phantoms gone,
Nor will return—but droop not, favoured Youth;
The apparition that before thee shone
Obeyed a summons covetous of truth.
From these wild rocks thy footsteps I will guide
To bowers in which thy fortunes may be tried,
And one of the bright three become thy happy bride."

This is Wordsworth's most ambitious delineation of female beauty. The Power and Grace of the whole Conception and Description is worthy to be placed on

canvas. The queenly and magnificent loveliness of Miss Southey—the wild wood beauty, and bird-like brightness of Dora Wordsworth—and the sweet and still and meditative calm of Miss Coleridge. It is a gorgeous and abstract idealization—the three beautiful figures are cold, perfect and thrilling as pieces of Grecian Statuary starting from the marble.

Alas where is that Triad now? Dora preceded her father to the quiet silence of Grasmere churchyard, and we *believe we are right* in saying that all the three of these bright originals are now Dust.

We have often had occasion to remark that the lives of poets are barren of incident, and this seems to be especially the case with Wordsworth, in truth there is some delusion in this expression, they are not barren of interest, nor do they lack incident in their own world; we must not expect in one life the things of another; circumstances of romantic and adventurous interest, these we can scarcely expect to find; the noisy and stirring incident; but surely the writing a poem, which was destined to charm, to sooth, to educate and inspire, or the finding the subject of such a poem, these are circumstances not without interest; doubtless the life of De Foe, or of George Borrow, might present to most persons the most attractive range of objects, but the day when our poet stood on the high cliffs over Tintern Abbey, or mused over Aquapendente, or when the first conception of Peter Bell, or Ruth, passed through his mind, these, and days like these, were of most moment and interest to his own mind, and probably they will

ever, to a large class of minds delighted with such raptures and visions, be interesting too. We have followed our poet from place to place, and have seen in some measure the influence certain travellings, and friendships, and places, had over his mind, we must now rapidly hasten on to a succession of the same circumstances.

In the summer of 1839 Mr. Wordsworth had conferred upon him the distinction of D.C.L. by the University of Oxford, and it was very appropriate that he was presented for his degree by the Professor of Poetry, the Rev. John Keble, the author of "The Christian Year." To many of Mr. Wordsworth's friends this honor was very gratifying;—it was the crowning of Petrarch in the capitol. Mention is made of one who had walked some distance to Oxford, to join in the shout, but it was one of those laurels conferred by Fame when it is useless longer to withhold. No doubt the honor too, slightly affected even the poet, so usually insensible to praise, but honors coming to him now could move him but little; grey hairs cannot regard very highly the green bays; and yet it is frequently the case that Fame withholds her praises until we can no longer prize them, and the jaded mind longs rather for rest from all the vanities of human applause; she can only prompt us and impel, so long as we do not know the true value of the boon she has to bestow.

On November 11th, 1840, an alarming accident happened to the Poet: he was thrown from a gig near Keswick. He sustained no injury, although in imminent danger. The circumstance elicited a large amount

of enquiring sympathy from the lowest peasant of the neighbourhood to the Queen Dowager.

It was nearly about this time, only a few months later, that the Poet wrote to Professor Reed of Philadelphia, "Your letters naturally turned upon the impression which my poems have made, and the estimation they are held, or likely to be held in, through the vast country to which you belong. I wish I could feel as lively as you do on this subject, or even upon the general destiny of those works. Pray do not be surprised at this declaration; there is a difference of more than the length of your life I believe between our ages. I am standing on the brink of that vast ocean I must sail so soon; I must speedily lose sight of the shore, and I could not once have conceived how little I am now troubled by the thought of how long or short a time they who remain on that shore may have sight of me. The other day I chanced to be looking over a MS. poem, belonging to the year 1803, though not actually composed till many years afterwards. It was suggested by visiting the neighbourhood of Dumfries, in which Burns had resided, and where he died, it concluded thus,

> 'Sweet mercy to the gates of heaven
> This minstrel led, his sins forgiven,
> The tuneful conflict, the heart riven
> With vain endeavour;
> And memory of earth's bitter leaven
> Effaced for ever.'

"Here the verses closed, but I instantly added the other day

'But why to him confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear
On the frail heart the purest share
With all that live,
The best of what we do, and are
Just, God forgive.'

"The more I reflect upon this last exclamation, the more I feel (and perhaps it may in some degree be the same with you) justified in attaching comparatively small importance to any literary monument that I may be enabled to leave behind. It is well however I am convinced, that men think otherwise in the earlier part of their lives."

Perhaps there never was a poet who had his privacy so constantly invaded by adoring pilgrims as ours; the Lake season found his house constantly beset. Wanderers through the scenery of the lakes who had any appreciation at all of Wordsworth's genius or eminence, made their arrangements as much to see him, as any other of the mighty majesties of the neighbourhood. Helvellyn, Skiddaw, Scawfell—and Wordsworth—the tour would be unsatisfactory if it did not include the last. This must have been to such a man a severe penalty to pay for popularity; his path-way was beset from day to day by wanderers, determined on obtaining a glimpse of him; then the letters of introduction were innumerable, and he said to the writer "you will be surprised were I to tell you that I think I have almost more from America than from England."

His hospitality was general, but simple; whoever

stepped in at tea time usually had an invitation to stay; his visitors were of all professions, and of all ranks, and perhaps as an English Shrine, Rydal Mount stands next to Stratford-on-Avon for the multitude and devotion of its palmer spirits. The servant, who was to the poet gardener, groom, and something more, a loving and faithful, and watchful heart, cut his master's hair, but the locks were never thrown away from that venerable head, but have found their way into hundreds of hands in every part of the Empire; he kept also a quantity of cards with the poet's autograph, and thus he sometimes comforted those who failed to see him, by either a lock of his hair, or a dash of his pen.

All ranks, from the very loftiest to the lowest, delighted in honoring the "Sole King of Rocky Cumberland." When the Queen Dowager Adelaide passed through Westmoreland in 1840, she visited Rydal, and the Poet was her cicerone to the Waterfalls, walking by the Queen's side, and pointing her attention to the most prominent beauties of the scenery. That day was a holiday in Rydal; the children of the school came with flags, and bands, and garlands, from Ambleside to meet the Queen; she walked with Wordsworth through his grounds, and sat also some time in his house; and when she left she shook hands heartily with Mrs. Wordsworth, and enquired for Dora, who was introduced to her, thus all persons joined in the homage which greeted the poet; every rank lent the tribute of its admiration, and if the Laureate felt sometimes the honors to be cumbersome, as the burdens and honors of Royalty usually are, yet

it must have been a solace to find how, in spite of Reviewers and their craft, his words had found their way to the hearts and homes of the English people.

William Howitt says, "As it is he has an everlasting censer of the flattery of public curiosity tossing at his door. Note after note is sent in, the long levee continues from day to day—the aged minstrel votes it a bore, and quietly enjoys it.* If not, how easy it would be, just during the laking season, to vanish from the spot to another equally pleasant, and yet more retired. Yet, why should he? It is not as if the visits interrupted the progress of a life's great labour. That labour is done; competence and fame are acquired; the laurel and the larder have equally flourished at Rydal Mount: and what is more agreeable than to receive the respect of his fellow-men, and diffuse the pleasure of having seen and conversed with one of the lights of the age?

"Some years ago, spending a few days there with Mrs. Howitt, we witnessed a curious scene. The servant came in, announcing that a gentleman and a large party of ladies wished to see the place. 'Very well, they can see it,' said Mr. Wordsworth.

"'But the gentleman wished to see you, sir.'

"'Who is he: did he give his name?'

* This is all very well of Mr. Howitt. We however incline with "the aged minstrel" to "vote it a bore:" it is not delightful to have domestic life intruded on by absolute strangers, at any moment of the day; it must have involved, what Wordsworth would feel to be, a great waste of time, and we fancy the flattery of the visit would be poor moonshine to a man like the Poet; the kindness of his spirit tolerated it and made it delightful to his visitor.

"'No, sir.'

"'Then ask him for it.'

"The servant went, and returned saying 'The gentleman said that he knew Mr. Wordsworth's name very well, as everybody did, but that Mr. Wordsworth would not know his if he sent him his card.'

"'Then say I am sorry, but I cannot see him.'

"The servant once more disappeared, and the Poet broke forth into a declamation on the bore of these continual and importunate—not to say impudent—visits. In the midst of it the servant entered.

"'Well, what did the man say?'

"'That he had had the honor to shake hands with the Duke of Wellington, and that his last remaining wish in life was to shake hands with Mr. Wordsworth.'

"This was too good. An universal scream of merriment burst from us. The Poet rose laughing heartily; Mrs. and Miss Wordsworth, laughing as heartily, gently seized him each by an arm, and thus merrily pushed him out of the room. In another minute, we beheld the worthy host bowing to the man who possessed such irresistible rhetoric, and to his large accompaniment of ladies, and doing the amiable, by pointing out to them the prominent beauties of the view. The cunning fellow was a Manchester manufacturer." *

The truth was, that in the latter years of the Poet's life he was an object of as much interest as any of the features of his county; and there are many persons who

* Homes and Haunts of the British Poets, vol. II. pp. 289, 290.

pay homage, not from sympathy and reverence, which is always modest and charming, but from the wish to be able to say whom they had "seen." Wordsworth had to bear the burden of large sympathy, and of being the object of great notoriety too, but he received his visitors always with a dignified affability; and no doubt while he treated all with a bland courtesy, he prolonged or shortened the visit according to the mental and moral worth of the visitor.

And in the course of his conversation with all persons with whom he conversed, he threw forth his words of thought and criticism, frequently most happily expressed; he did not indeed know much of modern books and authors, and for many with which he had some acquaintance, he did not express himself in very admiring terms, yet usually very justly. How admirable his criticism on Thomas Moore.

"Moore has great natural genius; but he is too lavish of brilliant ornament. His poems smell of the perfumers' and milliner's shops. He is not content with a ring and a bracelet, but he must have rings in the ear, rings on the nose—rings everywhere."

Of Shelley he thought more highly than of Byron: he said,

"Shelley is one of the best *artists* of us all: I mean in workmanship of style." Speaking of Goethe he says,

"He does not seem to me to be a great poet in either of the classes of poets. At the head of the first I would place Homer and Shakspeare, whose universal minds are able to reach every variety of thought and feeling, with-

out bringing his own individuality before the reader. They infuse, they breathe life into every object they approach, but you cannot find *themselves*. At the head of the second class, those whom you can trace individually in all they write, I would place Spenser and Milton. In all Spenser writes, you can trace the gentle, affectionate spirit of the man; in all that Milton writes you find the exalted, sustained being that he was. Now, in what Goethe writes, who aims to be of the first class, the *universal*, you find the man himself, the artificial man, where he should not be found; so that I consider him a very artificial writer, aiming to be universal, and yet constantly exposing his individuality, which his character was not of a kind to dignify. He had not sufficiently clear moral perceptions to make him anything but an artificial writer."

And again:—

"I have tried to read Goethe. I never could succeed. Mr. —— refers me to his 'Iphigenia,' but I there recognize none of the dignified simplicity, none of the health and vigour which the heroes and heroines of antiquity possess in the writings of Homer. The lines of Lucretius describing the immolation of Iphigenia, are worth the whole of Goethe's long poem. Again there is a profligacy, an inhuman sensuality in his works which is utterly revolting. I am not intimately acquainted with them generally, but I take my ground on the first canto of 'Wilhelm Meister,' and as the Attorney General of human nature, I there indict him for wantonly outraging the sympathies of humanity. Theologians

tell us of the degraded nature of man, and they tell us what is true; yet man is essentially a moral agent, and there is that immortal and unextinguishable yearning for something pure and spiritual, which will plead against these poetical sensualists as long as man remains what he is."

He repeated himself much, and frequently, as was perhaps natural in his conversations with various persons, thus many of the opinions which have found their way into print were expressed to the writer of this memoir, in conversations with the poet, which several times he was privileged to share.

The notices of Wordsworth and his conversations in the Journals and lives of eminent men, are numerous, indeed there are few biographies of men of eminence published within the last ten years which do not contain some characteristic notices of visits paid to him. Dr. Orville Dewey, of Boston in America, gives an interesting account of a visit paid in 1833.

"Mr. W——— converses with great earnestness, and has a habit as he walks and talks, of stopping every fourth or fifth step and turning round to you to enforce what he is saying.* The subjects the first evening I passed with him, were, as I have said, politics and poetry. He remarked afterward, that although he was known to the world only as a poet, he had given twelve hours' thought to the condition and prospects of society

* Every one who has walked with Wordsworth will remember this trait.

for one to poetry. I replied that there appeared to me to be no contradiction in this, since the spirit of poetry is the spirit of humanity, since sympathy with humanity and all its fortunes is an essential characteristic of poetry, and politics is one of the grandest forms under which the welfare of the human race presents itself.....He says the world is running mad with the notion that all its evils are to be relieved by political changes, political remedies, political nostrums; whereas the great evils, sin, bondage, misery, lie deep in the heart, and nothing but virtue and religion can remove them; and upon the value preciousness, and indispensableness of religion indeed, he talked very sagely, earnestly, and devoutly.

* * * *

"After this conversation Mr. W—— proposed a walk to Grasmere Lake, to see it after sunset, and in this loveliest of all the scenes I ever witnessed on earth, were lost all thoughts, but of religion and poetry. I could not help saying with fervent sincerity, 'I thank you, Sir, for bringing me here at this hour,' for he had evidently taken some pains, pushing aside some little interferences with his purpose to accomplish it. He said in reply, that so impressive was the scene to him, that he felt almost as if it were a sin not to come here every fair evening. We sat by the shore half an hour, and talked of themes far removed from the strife of politics. The village on the opposite side lay in a deep shadow, from which the tower of the church rose like heaven's sentinel on the gates of evening. A single taper shot its solitary ray across the waters; the little lake lay

hushed in deep and solemn repose; not a sound was heard upon its shore; the fading light trembled upon the bosom of the waters, which were here slightly ruffled, and there lay as a mirror to reflect the serenity of heaven. The dark mountains lay beyond, with every varying shade that varying distance could give them; the farthest ridges were sowed with light, as if it were resolved into separate particles, and showered down into the darkness below, to make it visible. The mountain side had a softness of shadowing upon it, such as I never saw before, and such as no painting I ever saw, approached in the remotest degree; it seemed, Mr. Wordsworth said, as if it were '*clothed with air.*' Above all was the clear blue sky, looking almost *cold*, it looked so pure along the horizon, but warmed in the region a little higher with the vermillion tints of the softest sunset. I am persuaded the world might be travelled over without the sight of one such spectacle as this, and all owing to the circumstances, the time, the hour; it was perhaps not the least of those circumstances influencing the scene, that it was an hour passed in one of his own holy retreats with Wordsworth."*

The passage in Dr. Channing's Discourse in the Present Age, on the Genius and Writings of Wordsworth as a characteristic of our times, will be fresh in the recollection of most readers. His visit to the poet was interesting. He says, "I could not but think of the amusement I should have afforded you could you have taken a peep

* "The Old World and the New," by Dr. Orville Dewey.

at me. I had spent Sunday morning at Grasmere, one of the sweetest and most peace-breathing spots under the skies, and in the afternoon, being unable to attend church, I resolved to visit Mr. Wordsworth, who resides two miles and a half from the inn.

"Unluckily Grasmere, whilst it supplied the wants of the imagination and heart most abundantly, could not supply me with any vehicle for the body more easy, or dignified than a cart, dragged by a horse who had caught nothing of the grace of the surrounding scene. After an interview of great pleasure and interest, I set out to return, and unwilling to lose Mr. Wordsworth's society, I accepted his proposition that we should walk together until I was fatigued. At the end of half a mile my strength began to fail, and finding my companion still earnest in conversation, I invited him to take a seat with me, which he did, and in this state we re-entered the delightful valley. Happily the air was mild, and I began to think that providence, in distributing lots, had not been so severe as one might at first be inclined to feel, in limiting multitudes to such a mode of conveyance, for I enjoyed the fine prospects of Rydal and Grasmere, as I could not have done in a covered carriage. You perhaps might have promised me the honor of being introduced with the cart and horse into a 'lyrical ballad,' but to me, who, as you know, profess to be greatly in debt to Mr. Wordsworth's genius, and whose respect and affection were heightened by personal intercourse, there seemed a peculiar felicity in riding through this scene of surpassing tenderness with a man

of genius and sensibility, who had caught inspiration from the lakes and the mountains, in whose beauty I too had been rejoicing.

Mr. Wordsworth's conversation was free, various, animated; we talked so eagerly as often to interrupt one another; and as I descended into Grasmere, near sunset, with the placid lake before me, and Wordsworth talking and reciting poetry with a poet's spirit by my side, I felt that the combination of circumstances was such as my highest hopes could never have anticipated."*

Yes, there had arisen a large band of litérati, to whom Wordsworth stood somewhat in the relation of a Patriarch; his writings indeed did not contain the age, but they contained one half of it. The intense and volcanic excitement of our times, so fostered, fed and reflected by the writings of Carlyle and Kingsley, and a hundred others who might be mentioned; those who in addition to a Self-consciousness such as no age before ever echoed to possess a fierce and fiery lava stream of eloquence greatly like the actions of the age in which they write, these, especially the first mentioned, while paying tribute to the genius of Wordsworth, have not possessed the power to derive much from him. But the race of men whose self consciousness has been sublimed by Christian feeling and truth; and even some, who like Tennyson bathe their verses in the golden waters and sunsets of a diviner kind of Paganism; these all have

* Life of Channing, vol. II.

had their genius coloured by the writings of Wordsworth. Reading his poems we are reminded of the fine words in a Poet whose genius has been greatly fostered by Wordsworth.

> "Spirit of speculation, rest, oh rest!
> And push not from her place the spirit of prayer!
> God who thou'st given unto me a troubled being—
> So move upon the face thereof, that light
> May be, and be divided from the darkness." *

Self-consciousness, which is the curse and the enchantment of our age, is fed by these waters of poesy, and he who has not the disposition habitually to commune with himself, will find little attraction in our poet. He says,

"I saw Tennyson when I was in London, several times. He is decidedly the first of our living poets, and I hope will live to give the world still better things. You will be pleased to hear that he expressed in the strongest terms his gratitude to my writings. To this I was far from indifferent, though persuaded he is not much in sympathy with what I should myself most value in my attempts—viz., the spirituality with which I have endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which I have wished to exhibit its most ordinary appearances."

There are few of our worthier poets who have not expressed similar obligations, but the influence of the poet is especially seen in such writers as Sir Aubrey De

* Taylor—"Edwin the Fair."

Vere, Frederick Faber, and Henry Alford; at the same time, in innumerable other directions, the power of the poet was being felt, and felt most healthfully, as testified by many such dedications as those of Archdeacon Hare, of the guesses of Truth, in terms of most affectionate veneration to the aged and honoured Poet.

Byron founded a School of Passion and of Spleen, a diseased, hysterical, and affected scream ran through the world of imitative literature on the publication of his poems. Wordsworth also founded a School, but of healthful, thoughtful, musing spirits. Henry Taylor remarks, "It is true of the last twenty years that popular poetry has lost its popularity, but it is also true of the last ten that poetry which has aimed at a higher mark than popularity, has gained a large accession of devoted students; of readers who seek in poetry the highest knowledge invested with the least perishable charm; it is these men who lay the foundation of a great poet's fame, and it is through a popular recognition of their judgment, and a sympathy with their admiration, that such poets as Milton and Wordsworth come to be popular in the only sense in which they can be said to be so, that is that their merits come to be fully acknowledged, though but partially felt and perceived by readers at large."*

Among the poets who may be called the disciples of Wordsworth, may especially be mentioned Henry Alford, Rector of Wymeswold in Leicestershire, the author of

* Notes of Books, pp. 232-233.

the School of the Heart; many others might be instanced, but he has called the patriarch,

> "That reverend Priest of Poesy,
> Whose presence shines upon these twilight times
> Hath, in CHURCHYARD IN THE MOUNTAINS, done
> One sacrifice whose scent shall fill the world."

The whole of "The School of the Heart" is worthy of its inspiration—the Excursion—and is no servile imitation; and in the following little gems how clearly flows the same spirit which dictated "We are Seven."

A DOUBT.

> Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop
> Than when we soar.—WORDSWORTH.

"I know not how the right may be:—
But I give thanks whene'er I see
Down in the green slopes of the West
Old Glastonbury's towered crest.

"I know not how the right may be:—
But I have oft had joy to see
By play of chance my road beside
The Cross on which the Saviour died.

"I know not how the right may be:—
But I loved once a tall elm-tree,
Because between its boughs on high
That Cross was opened on the sky.

"I know not how the right may be:
But I have shed strange tears to see,
Passing an unknown town at night,
In some warm chamber full of light
A mother and two Children fair
Kneeling with lifted hands at prayer.

"I know not how it is—my boast
Of Reason seems to dwindle down;
And my mind seems down-argued most
By forced conclusions not her own.

"I know not how it is—unless
Weakness and strength are near allied;
And joys which most the spirit bless
Are furthest off from earthly pride."

AN ANCIENT MAN.

"There is an Ancient Man who dwells
  Without our parish bounds,
Beyond the poplar avenue,
  Across two meadow-grounds:
And whensoe'er our two small bells
  To church call merrily,
Leaning upon our churchyard gate
  This old man ye may see.

"He is a man of many thoughts,
  That long have found their rest,
Each in its proper dwelling-place
  Settled within his breast;
A form erect, a stately brow,
  A set and measured mien—
The satisfied unroving look
  Of one who much hath seen.

"And once, when young in care of souls,
  I watched a sick man's bed,
And willing half, and half-ashamed,
  Lingered, and nothing said;
That ancient man, in accents mild,
  Removed my shame away—
'Listen!' he said; 'the Minister
  Prepares to kneel and pray.'

"These lines of humble thankfulness
Will never meet his eye;
Unknown that old man means to live,
And unremembered die.
The forms of life have severed us—
But when that life shall end,
Fain would I hail that reverend man
A Father and a Friend."

In January, 1849, Wordsworth lost a very near neighbour, in whom, for his father's sake, and for his own he felt a real and vivid interest, Hartley Coleridge. The cottage in which he lived stands about a mile from Rydal Mount, opposite to Loughrigg. The lines Wordsworth had addressed to him when only six years of age, called forth by the wild and dreamy genius of the boy, had become a prophecy; he speaks of him as

"Thou fairy voyager! that dost float
In such clear water, that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air than on an earthly stream;
* * * *
I think of thee with many fears—
For what thy lot may be in future years;
I thought of times when pain might be thy guest,
Lord of thy house, and hospitality,
And grief, uneasy lover never rest,
But when she sat within the touch of thee."

These words were realized in his life; he had all the errors and the madness and the glory of the poet; much of the father was fused into the character of Hartley; he had more robustness of thought, and greater tenacity

of purpose in his intellectual performances, but there was also much of the same vagrant and wandering dreamer. Some of his Poems and Essays are delightful, they strike out fine tones of thought and of emotion. He was the owner of a large region of mental wealth, which he never farmed, and every thing he published, or which has been published of his own composition, is rather the fringe of his genius than the body of it. From the beautiful memoir by Derwent Coleridge we must extract a passage from its relation to the subject of our memoir. He says, "while I restrict myself to general terms in speaking of the many affectionate regrets which were occasioned by my brother's death, and which I doubt not this record of his life will awaken, a word must be set apart for the aged friend,* who having watched with that insight, of which foresight is but the developed form, his hopeful, fearful childhood, had seen him as he lay a dying man, and now heard that he was no more. He was deeply affected; perhaps he remembered that the fear which he had so beautifully expressed, had proved more prophetic than the hope by which he had put it from him—that 'the morrow' had come to him, and many a morrow, with a full freight of injuries, from which he had not been saved by an early, a sudden, or an easy death. He dropped some hint of these thoughts, but his words were few, and concluded by this touching request, or, I should say direction—'let him lie by us, he would have wished it.'

* Wordsworth.

The day following he walked over with me to Grasmere, to the churchyard, a plain enclosure of the olden time, surrounding the old village church, in which lay the remains of his wife's sister, his nephew,* and his beloved daughter. Here having desired the sexton to measure out the ground for his own and for Mrs. Wordsworth's grave, he bade him to measure out the space of a third grave for my brother, immediately beyond. 'When I lifted up my eyes from my daughter's grave,' he exclaimed, 'he was standing there,' pointing to the spot where my brother had stood on the sorrowful occasion to which he alluded; then turning to the sexton he said, 'keep the ground for us, we are old people and it cannot be for long.' In the grave thus marked out my brother's remains were laid on the following Thursday, and in little more than a twelve month his venerable and venerated friend was brought to occupy his own. They lie in the south-east angle of the churchyard, not far from a group of trees, with the little beck that feeds the lake with its clear water murmuring by their side. Around them are the quiet mountains." †

Wordsworth lived in true neighbourly relationship to all his Village. Margaret Fuller says "It was pleasant to find the reverence inspired by this great and pure mind, warmest praise nearest home. Our landlady, in

* John Wordsworth, a very distinguished classical scholar, the son of Dr. Christopher Wordsworth, who did not die (although young) till he had given evidence of uncommon powers.

† Memoir of Hartley Coleridge, by Derwent Coleridge.—Poems, v. I. pp. 185-186.

heaping praise upon him added constantly—'and Mrs. Wordsworth too.' 'Do the people here said I value Mr. Wordsworth most because he is such a celebrated writer?' 'Truly Madam,' said she, 'I think it is because he is so kind a neighbour.'

"True to the kindred points of heaven and home." *

The end of the Poet's life approached gently, neither was the stroke swift and sudden, nor was it lingering and painful; his last views and wanderings were like those of his whole life, and his Nephew, without making any comment upon them, yet shows how they illustrate the course of his daily, simple patriarchal course. He attended Rydal Chapel on the 10th of March, 1850, for the last time. It was not an unusual thing for persons who had not a formal introduction to attend the chapel on purpose to see him, and to waylay him on his road home, to shake hands with him, or receive at any rate a passing recognition. On this day, after the service, he started for a walk to Grasmere with his son-in-law (the husband of his departed Dora), Mr. Quillinan, and Mr. Hutchinson. It was cold, and Mr. Wordsworth was as usual lightly clad; he walked over White Moss, and paid a visit to Mrs. Fisher, who had lived in his service when he resided at Town End. It is said that he seemed more than ordinarily feeble, and leaned even in sitting, on his stick. The next day, in the morning, he visited Mrs. Arnold, at Fox How, and

* Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli, vol. III., p. 84.

walked thence to Ambleside, and thence to Rydal: a tolerably long walk (about six miles) for an infirm old man of eighty. In the afternoon he started towards Grasmere to visit two nieces. He called at the White Moss Quarry Cottage; the occupant was not within, so he sat down on the stone seat in the porch to watch the setting sun; the sun was indeed sinking that had shed the light of its genius over half a century. It is probable this was his last look out upon the setting sun. That evening he went very early to bed. On the 14th the symptoms became more alarming, medical advice was resorted to, and he continued for a fortnight fluctuating from day to day. On Sunday the 7th of April he completed his eightieth year, and he was prayed for in Rydal Chapel both in the morning and afternoon. A young lady, a friend of the family, gave to Dr. Wordsworth the following notes; they are very interesting as a Diary, recorded in the house while these dark hours were passing. "At eleven this morning, the 20th, I went up to the Mount; William Wordsworth came in while I was in the dining-room, and asked me if I would go up stairs and see his father, who is becoming weaker every day. I met Mr. John Wordsworth* coming out of his father's room, very much affected. He had just been administering the Holy Communion to Mr. Wordsworth, who, when asked whether he would receive it, replied, 'That is just what I want.' When I stood by his bedside (he does not get up now) and

* Rector of Brigham near Cockermouth.

kissed him he pressed my hand, but did not speak. R—— afterwards came into his room, and said to him 'Here is your god-daughter;' to which he faintly murmured 'God bless you.'"

It was about this period that it was thought advisable that he should know what was now the opinion of his medical attendants, and Mrs. Wordsworth said gently to him, with a pathos which reveals the beautiful sensibility of her own heart, "William, you are going to Dora?" He made no reply; the words appeared to have been unheeded, and were most probably not heard. But more than twenty-four hours after, one of his nieces came into his room, and was drawing aside his curtains. He seemed to awake as if from a gentle sleep, and said, "Is that Dora?"

He was drawing nearer and nearer to Dora. It is not said that he ever spoke again. This was on the Monday, the 22nd of April.

The reader remembers the verses, "The Cuckoo Clock," whose mimic notes

> "Come to him who shuns the day,
> And nightly tosses on a bed of pain,
> In sleep, and intermingling with his dream,
> Mocking the wandering voice beside some haunted stream."

On Tuesday, the 23rd April, 1850, while *that* Cuckoo Clock was striking twelve, the great Poet of Nature quietly breathed his last, almost insensibly, and it is noticeable it was also the day on which Shakspeare died.

He was buried on Saturday the 27th, at Grasmere, in the "Church-yard among the mountains," followed

to the grave by an immense concourse of persons of all ranks and all ages—a sweet and appropriate place for a poet's tomb, in that deep silence, broken only by the murmurs of the river, or of the complaining winds, among the simple peasants and dalesmen whose history he has recorded. In a grave surrounded by the Sycamore and the Yew, next to that of Hartley Coleridge, next to his own children early lost; there is a large plain slab of grey limestone, and on it the simple inscription

"WILLIAM WORDSWORTH."

Within Grasmere Church, over the pew which the Poet occupied, his friends and neighbours have placed an elegant tablet with a very good medallion likeness and the following inscription:—

"IN MEMORY OF
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH,
A TRUE PHILOSOPHER AND POET, WHO, BY THE SPECIAL GIFT AND CALLING
OF ALMIGHTY GOD, WHETHER HE DISCOURSED ON MAN OR NATURE,
FAILED NOT TO LIFT UP THE HEART
TO HOLY THINGS;
TIRED NOT OF MAINTAINING THE CAUSE
OF THE POOR AND SIMPLE,
AND SO IN PERILOUS TIMES WAS RAISED UP TO BE A CHIEF MINISTER
NOT ONLY OF
NOBLEST POESY,
BUT OF
HIGH AND SACRED TRUTH.

THIS MEMORIAL
IS PLACED HERE BY HIS FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS, IN TESTIMONY OF
THEIR RESPECT, AFFECTION, AND GRATITUDE."

A Monument has also been placed in Westminster Abbey, which it may be hoped will by-and-by stand where it may be seen: at present it occupies a place in almost ignominious isolation.

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